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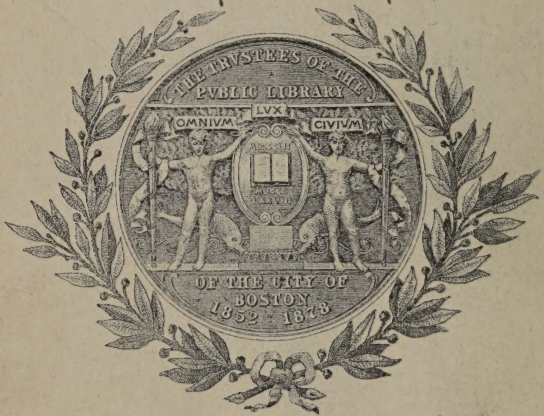

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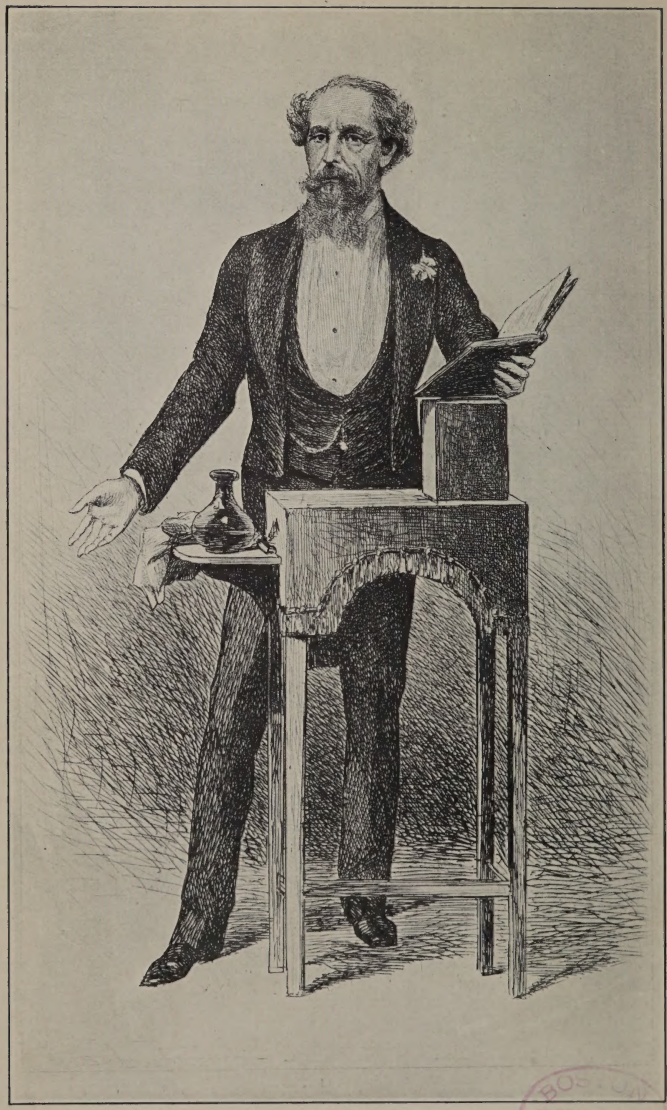

A READING BY CHARLES DICKENS

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The Riverside Literature Series

A DICKENS READER

ARRANGED BY

ELLA M. POWERS

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The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly
noble Dickens, — every inch of him
an honest man.
Carlyle.

PREFACE

This book is designed to present to its readers a few brilliant examples from the many that are to be found in the work of the eminent English novelist, Charles Dickens, and to induce in them a profound interest in his varied writings. The compiler seeks to make intimately familiar a few pages that serve to illustrate the humor and pathos of this unrivalled writer and the skill in description and narration wherein he so greatly excelled. It is hoped that young persons who may read this volume may be stimulated by it to an extensive knowledge of the author's works in their complete forms.

Preceding each selection is a note regarding the book from which the extract has been taken. With but few abridgments, the author's diction has been carefully followed. The selections have been used not only on account of surpassing literary merit, nor wholly because they have become especial favorites in the minds of many discriminating readers, but also for the reason that, in frequent instances, they teach forcible lessons of honor, nobility, kindliness, good faith, gentleness, charity, and a certain broad sympathy with animate nature in its manifold forms.

Moreover it is hoped that the book will prove

useful to persons of adult age who may have lacked hitherto the opportunity and have not now the leisure to read the entire works of the "master hand that drew the sorrows of the English poor" and lightened and cheered the lives of so many readers throughout the English-speaking world.

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CHARLES DICKENS

THERE was once a boy who kept his mind upon the great and famous man that he would like to become. He thought of this so much and so often, and believed in it so thoroughly, that he at last grew to be a man the whole world learned to know and to love.

His name was Charles Dickens; he was born at Landport, England, about one hundred years ago, for his birthday was February 7, 1812. His father was a government clerk having a salary far too small to give the boy many pretty playthings; — in fact, he did not have what other children possessed; so, in imagination he made most of his playthings and invented many of his games. But he did not complain, even if there were days when there was only a scanty allowance of bread to eat.

When this "very queer, small boy" was two years old, the family moved to the great, strange, lonesome city of London. And indeed, it was very lonesome there to the frail, sensitive boy and he was not sorry when, two years later, they moved to Chatham. Here were chalk hills and deep green lanes; bits of woodland and marshes, over which he could wander; and at night he and his sister Fanny could watch the stars from

their windows. Yes, the boy liked Chatham far better than London.

One of his best-loved friends was a book. No happiness was quite so satisfying as a book in an unmolested corner of an old neglected bookroom in their house. Here he would sit and read *Don Quixote*, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and other favorite stories.

When he was nine years old, the family returned to London. There he would wander along some of the city streets, — not a very pretty part of the city either, — for there was a great deal of dust, much wretchedness, many beggars, and filth. Such things the boy disliked.

He soon began to realize that his father was poor, — very poor, — and he knew that their home was a shabby one. With tired, aching feet, and a heavy little heart, the boy would daily trudge along in the glaring sun or the heavy mist, wondering and wondering what he could possibly do to increase the family income, for he knew that his father did not get money enough for their needs.

On some days the boy did not have enough to eat; and with hungry eyes and a keen appetite, he would stop in front of some baker's window and look wistfully and long at the tempting array of cakes and pies and buns which were displayed there; but these were not for him. So with a

good heart, and a last, longing look, he would summon all his courage and trudge along down the narrow street.

Struggles and hardships were met cheerfully each day. Charles was then old enough to feel acutely poverty and suffering ; and indeed, long after this, he could not speak of these dark days without a shiver of pain and with tears in his blue eyes.

Then there came a day still sadder than all the others when the ten-year old boy was told that his father had lost his position ; that his father owed much money, and that he must be sent to prison because he could not pay his debts. This seemed very hard, but it was according to the English law at that time and laws must be obeyed. Then the boy felt hopeless and helpless. Oh, the disgrace of it all! His heart seemed ready to break. His father in the Marshalsea prison for debt! His own father ! The words rang in the ears of the sensitive boy night and day.

Were there ever such pinching days of hardship and shame, such weary days of anxiety and despair? The boy determined to do something for the relief of the family. What should he do? What could he do? With a sorrowful heart, he took his precious books, one by one, to a pawnshop and sold them. Soon he had parted with all of them, but he was too brave to admit the grief that he felt.

The days passed and after many weary efforts, a position was finally obtained for him in a blacking factory. Day after day he walked four miles to his work and tramped homeward over the long way every night. Hour after hour he wearily pasted blue labels upon pots of paste blacking. And through all this, his heart was brave and unflinching. Would not his six shillings each week keep himself and his dear ones from starvation?

At this time his mother went to live in the prison with his father, but Charles had to live apart from them in a little attic room. Away up and up a long flight of narrow, creaky, steep stairs he would climb each day to his dreary, little room. He always looked so brave and cheery that no one guessed the secret suffering that he endured. What a solitary little waif he was! No home; no books; no hope; no help. Although he felt neglected, and the loneliness was bitter, the boy was not discouraged.

In his wretched condition, he might easily have become, with many of the other boys, "a little robber or a little vagabond." But every temptation was manfully conquered and he fled from dangers which he felt were near; yet nothing escaped his eye. He learned to know thoroughly the life among those boys.

After a little time he took lodgings near the prison. Then he was allowed to go and see his mother and father every day and often ate with

them on Sunday. But he never told any one that his father was in prison. Oh, no! That secret was humiliating and his sensitive heart felt too deeply the shame.

He was quick to learn and he was deeply interested in the persons he saw. Daily he met the queer and the pitiful; the poor, ragged, and hopeless. He never forgot them. The scenes did not harden his heart, but made him feel very gentle and tender toward all who were unhappy and suffering.

After a time, there came a brighter period when the father was released from prison, his affairs having been adjusted and improved. Then it was that the boy was told that he could go to school once more. What joy this was! Rude knocks or other hardships at any school could not be worse than those weary months in the blacking establishment. And so it was a very cheerful boy who started forth for study at Wellington House school.

He liked wonderfully well a certain club that was formed among the boys for the purpose of circulating stories and having private theatricals. From tables and chairs a stage was improvised and it was all very fine indeed with Dickens to take the part of several characters. Once he wrote a little play, — and very tragic it was too! It was called, *The Sultan of India*. His admiring young friends declared it to be the very finest and

best thing they had ever heard, or seen or, read about. No doubt it was. Their enthusiasm was boundless and they said to Dickens, "You will certainly be famous some day." Dickens was pleased with their boyish approval and gaily replied, "That is just what I intend to become. Some day, I hope to be a learned and distinguished gentleman."

And then his stories! Why, he could tell the most marvellous tales! Even at this early date, what fame he did achieve among his associates as a story teller! Could any one else give such reality to the characters he had himself created? Surely not. And Dickens was greatly pleased with his success as an entertainer.

When he was fifteen years old, it became necessary for him to earn some money. He secured a position in a lawyer's office, where he remained for nearly two years. He there had opportunities for close observation of men and manners. This was of great use to him in his literary work. This bright, eager boy wasted no time you may be sure. He was the sort of boy, too, that everybody loves. He thought high thoughts. He tried to live and do his very best each day.

When he was seventeen, he became a reporter on a newspaper. Instead of idly wandering about when his work was over, he spent many of his leisure hours in a reading room at the British Museum. He read and studied and then read

more books. He mastered the intricate system of shorthand, knowing this would help him to be a better reporter. How he practised those lessons! Many an evening he sat up until midnight trying to acquire speed and accuracy with the troublesome, puzzling little curves and lines, all of which, when mastered, would help him to a better position. Two years were spent in reporting law cases in the courts. All this work gave him an added insight into various conditions of life. And so he lived and worked and studied.

Two years later, he entered the parliamentary gallery and became a reporter of important political speeches in and out of Parliament. This duty still greatly enlarged his knowledge and for five years he distinguished himself in that work. Among eighty or ninety reporters, Charles Dickens was acknowledged to be the best. Strict accuracy and quickness were required and he was determined to excel. Whatever he did was done well.

We see him with a postchaise and four galloping across the country, taking notes of some speech, then writing at a brisk rate by the dim light of a lantern, and dashing back to the printing office with his notes all perfectly correct. Again, what if the coach was delayed, the horses exhausted, a coach wheel broken or stuck in the mud? It seemed to make no difference in the punctuality of Dickens. In some way he reached

the newspaper office and his copy was passed in as if nothing unfortunate had happened. How he did it, no one knew, only Charles Dickens was always to be depended upon under any circumstances.

In 1833, when he was twenty-one years old, he wrote several sketches of street life and they were sent to the *Evening Chronicle*, a newspaper published in London. These sketches were signed, "Boz." They were totally unlike anything that had ever been written. They were so good and were so well done that he was asked to write more. He copied no man's style. It is always useless for a man to imitate another. For this work Dickens got many suggestions from scenes that he knew about in real life.

Then a publishing firm wished him to write some humorous sketches. His next book was called *Pickwick Papers*. This work made him famous. People who read it laughed; read it again and laughed again. They said, "Who is this 'Boz'?" "He must write more for us. We must read everything he writes." Everywhere this work attracted attention. Forty thousand copies were sold each month. This success meant for Charles Dickens much money and comfort, such as he had never before known.

The next year he published his first novel, *Oliver Twist*. Those who read it could not forget it because it made a deep and lasting impres-

sion upon the minds of its readers. It told them of life among the lower classes as it then existed and conditions of which they had little knowledge.

From this period the pen of Charles Dickens was never idle. For thirty-seven years it gave to the people book after book, each one differing from the previous work and each one marvellous. The author rapidly wrote and the people eagerly read. Wonderful were the characters he introduced to the world. His readers liked the way his books were written. They liked the humor and wit, the drollery and pathos in which his books abound. More than this, Dickens made every reader feel intimately acquainted with every character in his books.

And so the years were full and overflowing with work. The tireless pen wrote on and the writer took little rest. The books were full of life, — real life, — and wider and wider became the popularity of the author. Dickens awakened a wide interest in the poor and the unfortunate. He brought to light many gross wrongs and improved conditions resulted. Daniel Webster once said of him, "All the men in Parliament have not done so much as Dickens to ameliorate the condition of the English poor."

In 1842 Dickens visited America. Seldom had a royal visitor ever received a more hearty welcome than greeted him here. He visited many of

the principal cities in this country and after returning to England, he wrote a book called *American Notes* which contained a record of much that he saw and did when in America.

Dickens had several homes. Among them all, none was more beautiful than the lovely home at Gads Hill, the high, airy country retreat in Kent. Such beautiful trees of holly, ivy and laurel! Such gardens full of strawberries in their season! Such vines and climbing roses! Then there was a charming little summer house which was presented to him by one of his admirers. A tunnel from the front of the lawn and under the highway emerged among the shrubbery at this summer house. Here, he wrote and read, studied and thought.

The pleasant brick mansion with its wealth of flowers and vines was no less attractive within. From his library window he could see the road where the Canterbury Pilgrims had passed; the road where Falstaff and the robbers scampered away. Shakespeare had made the place famous. Dickens had always longed to live in this house; for once, when a little boy, he had wandered out here with his father, who had then said, "If you work hard, you may, perhaps, live in a house like that some day." These words sank deep into the heart of the boy. Now, at the height of his fame, this very same house had become his very own.

GADSHILL FROM THE REAR

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On a blustering November evening in 1867, Dickens again came to America. When he arrived in Boston, he was given a welcome that was never forgotten. The warm, mighty cheers were: "Health, Happiness and a Hearty Welcome to Charles Dickens!" What a ringing, joyous welcome that was! And how good it must have seemed to him to grasp the hands of Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, and other friends!

This time he had come to read to the people in the United States. He was now a great author and reader. What masterly interpretations he gave and what vast audiences crowded to hear the famous man! Was there ever such delightful humor? Such pathos? His readings as well as his books, touched the innermost hearts of the people.

The poor boy had surely become "the learned and distinguished gentleman." Had he not met the world alone and unaided? He had struggled and he had conquered. His whole life had been one continual march — up-hill sometimes to be sure, — but at the top was fame, fortune, love, and honor. The world had been made more cheerful and happy, more sympathetic and kind, because of the loving and lovable presence in it of Charles Dickens.

There was no sadder sight than when, on one June day in 1870, the people filed reverently

into Westminster Abbey to look their last upon one who had touched their lives so closely. Long lines of children came. They had read about Little Nell and loved Oliver Twist and they felt they had lost a friend. There, in Westminster Abbey, Dean Stanley said, "He taught the world great lessons of the eternal value of generosity, of purity, of kindness and of unselfishness."

And so, among the great, the honored, the scholars, statesmen and warriors of England, Charles Dickens was laid to rest — one of the greatest novelists of all time. But the best monument is his life work — the books which have been read and loved by millions of people throughout the world.

A DICKENS READER

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby first appeared in 1839.

This story was begun a few months after the completion of *Pickwick Papers*. It was first issued in monthly shilling numbers and illustrated by "Phiz" (Hablot Browne).

The main object of this work was to expose the great neglect of education in England and the disregard of it by the State. It exposes the atrocious brutalities perpetrated in the cheap Yorkshire schools then in existence.

The author's purpose was effectual. Several years later the author was grateful to know that the system was gradually disappearing.

Nicholas Nickleby has accepted a position as assistant master in a school in Yorkshire, England, which is kept by Mr. Squeers. He is brutal and cruel to the boys. In this selection (from Chapter VIII) he is showing to Nicholas his method of teaching.

THE CLASS IN ENGLISH SPELLING AND PHILOSOPHY

After some half-hour's delay, Mr. Squeers reappeared, and the boys took their places and their books, of which latter commodity the average might be about one to eight learners. A few minutes having elapsed, during which Mr. Squeers looked very profound, as if he had a perfect apprehension of what was inside all the books, and could say every word of their contents

by heart if he only chose to take the trouble, that gentleman called up the first class.

Obedient to this summons there ranged themselves in front of the schoolmaster's desk half a dozen scarecrows, out at the knees and elbows, one of whom placed a torn and filthy book beneath his learned eye.

"This is the first class in English spelling and philosophy, Nickleby," said Squeers, beckoning Nicholas to stand beside him. "We 'll get up a Latin one, and hand that over to you. Now, then, where's the first boy?"

"Please, sir, he's cleaning the back parlor window," said the temporary head of the philosophical class.

"So he is, to be sure," rejoined Squeers. "We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickleby: the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, clean; verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of the book, he goes and does it. It's just the same principle as the use of the globes. Where's the second boy?"

"Please, sir, he's weeding the garden," replied a small voice.

"To be sure," said Squeers, by no means disconcerted. "So he is. B-o-t, bot, t-i-n, tin, bottin, n-e-y, ney, bottinney; noun substantive, a knowledge of plants. When he has learned that bottinney means a knowledge of plants, he goes and

knows 'em. That 's our system, Nickleby; what do you think of it?"

"It 's a very useful one at any rate," answered Nicholas.

"I believe you," rejoined Squeers, not remarking the emphasis of his usher.[1] "Third boy, what 's a horse?"

"A beast, sir," replied the boy.

"So it is," said Squeers. "Ain't it, Nickleby?"

"I believe there is no doubt of that, sir," answered Nicholas.

"Of course there is n't," said Squeers. "A horse is a quadruped, and quadruped 's Latin for beast, as everybody that 's gone through the grammar knows, or else where 's the use of having grammars at all?"

"Where, indeed!" said Nicholas abstractedly.

"As you 're perfect in that," resumed Squeers, turning to the boy, "go and look after *my* horse, and rub him down well, or I 'll rub you down. The rest of the class go and draw water up, till somebody tells you to leave off, for it 's washing day to-morrow, and they want the coppers[2] filled."

So saying, he dismissed the first class to their experiments in practical philosophy, and eyed Nicholas with a look, half cunning and half doubtful, as if he were not altogether certain what he might think of him by this time.

[1] *Usher:* an assistant master in a school.

[2] *Copper:* a large copper boiler.

"That's the way we do it, Nickleby," he said, after a pause.

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders in a manner that was scarcely perceptible, and said that he saw it was. "And a very good way it is, too," said Squeers. "Now just take them fourteen little boys and hear them some reading, because, you know, we must begin to be useful. Idling about here won't do."

Mr. Squeers said this, as if it had suddenly occurred to him, either that he must not say too much to his assistant or that his assistant did not say enough to him in praise of the establishment.

The children were arranged in a semicircle round the new master, and he was soon listening to their dull, drawling, hesitating recital of those stories of engrossing interest which are to be found in the more antiquated spelling books.

In this exciting occupation, the morning lagged heavily on. At one o'clock, the boys, having previously had their appetites thoroughly taken away by stirabout[1] and potatoes, sat down in the kitchen to some hard salt beef, of which Nicholas was graciously permitted to take his portion to his own solitary desk, to eat it there in peace.

After this, there was another hour of crouching in the schoolroom and shivering with cold, and then school began again.

[1] *Stirabout:* a hasty pudding.

A CHILD'S DREAM OF A STAR[1]

THERE was once a child, and he strolled about a good deal, and thought of a number of things. He had a sister, who was a child too, and his constant companion. These two used to wonder all day long. They wondered at the beauty of the flowers; they wondered at the height and blueness of the sky; they wondered at the depth of the bright water; they wondered at the goodness and the power of God, who made the lovely world.

They used to say to one another, sometimes, "Supposing all the children upon earth were to die; would the flowers, and the water, and the sky, be sorry?" They believed they would be sorry. For, said they, the buds are the children of the flowers, and the little playful streams, that gambol down the hillsides, are the children of the water; and the smallest bright specks, playing at hide-and-seek in the sky all night, must surely be the children of the stars; and they would all be grieved to see their playmates, the children of men, no more.

There was one clear, shining star, that used to come out in the sky before the rest, near the church spire, above the graves. It was larger and

[1] *A Child's Dream of a Star* is found in a volume entitled, *Reprinted Pieces*. It first appeared in 1850.

more beautiful, they thought, than all the others, and every night they watched for it, standing hand in hand at a window. Whoever saw it first, cried out, "I see the star!" And often they cried out both together, knowing so well when it would rise and where. So they grew to be such friends with it, that, before lying down in their beds, they always looked out once again, to bid it good-night; and when they were turning round to sleep, they used to say, "God bless the star!"

But while she was still very young, — O, very, very young, — the sister drooped, and came to be so weak that she could no longer stand in the window at night; and then the child looked sadly out by himself, and, when he saw the star, turned round and said to the patient, pale face on the bed, "I see the star!" and then a smile would come upon the face, and a little weak voice used to say, "God bless my brother and the star!"

And so the time came — all too soon — when the child looked out alone, and when there was no face on the bed; and when there was a little grave among the graves, not there before; and when the star made long rays down towards him, as he saw it through his tears.

Now, these rays were so bright, and they seemed to make such a shining way from earth to heaven, that when the child went to his solitary bed, he dreamed about the star; and he

dreamed that, lying where he was, he saw a train of people taken up that sparkling road by angels. And the star, opening, showed him a great world of light, where many more such angels waited to receive them.

All these angels, who were waiting, turned their beaming eyes upon the people who were carried up into the star; and some came out from the long rows in which they stood, and fell upon the people's necks, and kissed them tenderly, and went away with them down avenues of light, and were so happy in their company, that, lying in his bed, he wept for joy.

But there were many angels who did not go with them, and among them one he knew. The patient face that once had lain upon the bed was glorified and radiant; but his heart found out his sister among all the host.

His sister's angel lingered near the entrance of the star, and said to the leader among those who had brought the people thither, "Is my brother come?"

And he said, "No."

She was turning hopefully away, when the child stretched out his arms, and cried, "O sister, I am here! Take me!" And then she turned her beaming eyes upon him, and it was night; and the star was shining into the room, making long rays down towards him as he saw it through his tears.

From that hour forth the child looked out upon the star as on the home he was to go to, when his time should come; and he thought that he did not belong to the earth alone, but to the star too, because of his sister's angel gone before.

There was a baby born to be a brother to the child; and while he was so little that he never yet had spoken a word, he stretched his tiny form out on his bed, and died.

Again the child dreamed of the opened star, and of the company of angels, and the train of people, and the rows of angels with their beaming eyes all turned upon those people's faces.

Said his sister's angel to the leader, "Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Not that one, but another."

As the child beheld his brother's angel in her arms, he cried, "O sister, I am here! Take me!" And she turned and smiled upon him. And the star was shining.

He grew to be a young man, and was busy at his books, when an old servant came to him, and said, "Thy mother is no more. I bring her blessing on her darling son."

Again at night he saw the star, and all that former company. Said his sister's angel to the leader, "Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Thy mother!"

A mighty cry of joy went forth through all the star, because the mother was reunited to her

two children. And he stretched out his arms, and cried, "O mother, sister, and brother, I am here! Take me!" And they answered him, "Not yet." And the star was shining.

He grew to be a man whose hair was turning gray, and he was sitting in his chair by the fireside, heavy with grief, and with his face bedewed with tears, when the star opened once again.

Said his sister's angel to the leader, "Is my brother come?"

And he said, "Nay, but his maiden daughter."

And the man who had been the child saw his daughter, newly lost to him, a celestial creature among those three; and he said, "My daughter's head is on my sister's bosom, and her arm is round my mother's neck, and at her feet there is the baby of old time, and I can bear the parting from her, God be praised!" And the star was shining.

Thus the child came to be an old man, and his once smooth face was wrinkled, and his steps were slow and feeble, and his back was bent. And one night, as he lay upon his bed, his children standing round, he cried, as he had cried so long ago, "I see the star!"

And they whispered one another, "He is dying."

And he said, "I am. My age is falling from me like a garment and I move toward the star as a child. And O, my Father, now I thank thee

that it has often opened to receive those dear ones who await me."

And the star was shining; and it shines upon his grave.

THE PICKWICK PAPERS

The Pickwick Papers was published in 1836. *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* contains neither pathos nor dramatic passages. It is a purely comedy story. It is humorous throughout. Hablot Browne, or "Phiz," illustrated the story. The success of this book was immediate and it laid the foundation of Dickens's fame. While the types portrayed are all caricatures, they are nevertheless individual types. Mr. Pickwick is the founder of the Pickwick Club. From varied conditions of life are drawn the ludicrous characters which the book contains. Few authors have such skill in caricaturing as Dickens. He was a master of the art. This fact was early and universally acknowledged. The dialogues overflow with humor; the descriptions are graphic and vivid; this book is a general favorite.

The selections are from Chapters XXX, VII, V and XXX respectively.

MR. WINKLE ON SKATES

"Now," said Mr. Wardle, after a substantial lunch had received ample justice, "what say you to an hour on the ice? We shall have plenty of time."

"Capital!" said Mr. Benjamin Allen.

"Prime!" ejaculated Mr. Bob Sawyer.

"You skate, of course, Winkle?" said Wardle.

"Ye—yes;" replied Mr. Winkle. "I—I—am *rather* out of practice."

"Oh, *do* skate, Mr. Winkle," said Arabella. "I like to see it so much."

"Oh, it is *so* graceful," said another young lady.

A third young lady said it was elegant, and a fourth expressed the opinion that it was "swan-like."

"I should be very happy, I'm sure," said Mr. Winkle, reddening; "but I have no skates."

This objection was at once overruled. Trundle had got a couple of pairs, and the fat boy announced that there were half-a-dozen more downstairs, whereat Mr. Winkle expressed exquisite delight, and looked exquisitely uncomfortable.

Old Wardle led the way to a pretty large sheet of ice; and the fat boy and Mr. Weller, having shoveled and swept away the snow that had fallen on it during the night, Mr. Bob Sawyer adjusted his skates with a dexterity which to Mr. Winkle was perfectly marvelous, and described circles with his left leg, and cut figures of eight; and inscribed upon the ice, without stopping for breath, a great many other pleasant and astonishing devices, to the excessive satisfaction of Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, and the ladies.

All this time Mr. Winkle, with his face and hands blue with the cold, had been forcing a gimlet into the soles of his feet, and putting his skates on, with the points behind, and getting the straps into a very complicated and entangled state, with the assistance of Mr. Snodgrass, who knew rather less about skates than a Hindoo.

At length, however, with the assistance of Mr. Weller, the unfortunate skates were firmly

screwed and buckled on, and Mr. Winkle was raised to his feet.

"Now, then, sir," said Sam, in an encouraging tone, "off vith you, and show 'em how to do it."

"Stop, Sam, stop!" said Mr. Winkle, trembling violently, and clutching hold of Sam's arms with the grasp of a drowning man. "How slippery it is, Sam!"

"Not an uncommon thing upon ice, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "Hold up, sir."

This last observation of Mr. Weller's bore reference to a demonstration Mr. Winkle made that instant, of a frantic desire to throw his feet in the air, and dash the back of his head on the ice.

"These — these — are very awkward skates, ain't they, Sam?" inquired Mr. Winkle, staggering.

"I 'm afeerd there 's a orkard gentleman in 'em, sir," replied Sam.

"Now, Winkle," cried Mr. Pickwick, quite unconscious that there was anything the matter. "Come, the ladies are all anxiety."

"Yes, yes," replied Mr. Winkle, with a ghastly smile. "I 'm coming."

"Just a-going to begin," said Sam, endeavoring to disengage himself. "Now, sir, start off."

"Stop an instant, Sam," gasped Mr. Winkle, clinging most affectionately to Mr. Weller. "I find I've got a couple of coats at home that I don't want. You may have them, Sam."

"Thank 'ee, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Never mind touching your hat, Sam," said Mr. Winkle, hastily. "You need n't take your hand away to do that. I meant to have given you five shillings this morning for a Christmas-box, Sam. I 'll give it you this afternoon, Sam."

"You are wery good, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Just hold me at first, Sam, will you?" said Mr. Winkle. "There — that 's right. I shall soon get in the way of it, Sam. Not too fast, Sam, not too fast."

Mr. Winkle, stooping forward, with his body half doubled up, was being assisted over the ice by Mr. Weller, in a very singular and un-swan-like manner, when Mr. Pickwick most innocently shouted from the opposite bank:

"Sam!"

"Sir?" said Mr. Weller.

"Here. I want you."

"Let go, sir," said Sam. "Don't you hear the governor a-callin'? Let go, sir."

With a violent effort, Mr. Weller disengaged himself from the agonized Pickwickian; and, in so doing, administered a considerable impetus to the unhappy Mr. Winkle. With an accuracy which no degree of dexterity or practice could have insured, that unfortunate gentleman bore swiftly down into the centre of the reel, at the very moment when Mr. Bob Sawyer was performing a flourish of unparalleled beauty. Mr.

Winkle struck wildly against him, and with a loud crash they both fell heavily down.

Mr. Pickwick ran to the spot. Bob Sawyer had risen to his feet, but Mr. Winkle was far too wise to do anything of the kind in skates. He was seated on the ice, making spasmodic efforts to smile; but anguish was depicted on every lineament of his countenance.

"Are you hurt?" inquired Mr. Benjamin Allen, with great anxiety.

"Not much," said Mr. Winkle, rubbing his back very hard.

Mr. Pickwick was excited and indignant. He beckoned to Mr. Weller, and said in a stern voice, "Take his skates off."

The command was not to be resisted. Mr. Winkle allowed Sam to obey it, in silence.

"Lift him up," said Mr. Pickwick. Sam assisted him to rise. Mr. Pickwick retired a few paces from the bystanders, and, beckoning his friend to approach, fixed a searching look upon him, and uttered in a low, but distinct and emphatic tone, these remarkable words:

"You 're a humbug, sir!"

"A what?" said Mr. Winkle, starting.

"A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it. An imposter, sir."

With these words, Mr. Pickwick turned slowly on his heel, and rejoined his friends.

MR. WINKLE GOES GUNNING

In less than five minutes after Mr. Pickwick had been shown to his comfortable bedroom, he fell into a sound and dreamless sleep, from which he was awakened only by the morning sun darting his bright beams reproachfully into the apartment. Mr. Pickwick was no sluggard; and he sprang like an ardent warrior from his tent — bedstead.

"Pleasant, pleasant country," sighed the enthusiastic gentleman, as he opened the lattice. . . .

The rich, sweet smell of the hay-ricks rose to his chamber window; the hundred perfumes of the little flower garden beneath scented the air around; the deep-green meadow shone in the morning dew that glistened on every leaf as it trembled in the gentle air; and the birds sang as if every sparkling drop were a fountain of inspiration to them. Mr. Pickwick fell into an enchanting and delicious reverie.

"Hallo!" was the sound that roused him.

He looked to the right, but he saw nobody; his eyes wandered to the left, and pierced the prospect; he stared into the sky, but he was n't wanted there; and then he did what a common mind would have done at once — looked into the garden, and there saw Mr. Wardle.

"How are you?" said that good-humored individual, out of breath with his own anticipations of pleasure. "Beautiful morning, ain't it? Glad to see you up so early. Make haste down, and come out. I'll wait for you here."

Mr. Pickwick needed no second invitation. Ten minutes sufficed for the completion of his toilet, and at the expiration of that time he was by the old gentleman's side.

"Hallo!" said Mr. Pickwick in his turn, seeing that his companion was armed with a gun, and that another lay ready on the grass. "What's going forward?"

"Why, your friend and I are going out rook-shooting before breakfast. He's a very good shot, ain't he?"

"I've heard him say he's a capital one," replied Mr. Pickwick, "but I never saw him aim at anything." . . .

"This is the place," said the old gentleman, pausing after a few minutes walking, in an avenue of trees. The information was unnecessary, for the incessant cawing of the unconscious rooks sufficiently indicated their whereabout.

The old gentleman laid one gun on the ground, and loaded the other.

"Here they are," said Mr. Pickwick; and as he spoke, the forms of Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and Mr. Winkle appeared in the distance.

"Come along," shouted the old gentleman, addressing Mr. Winkle; "a keen hand like you ought to have been up long ago, even to such poor work as this."

Mr. Winkle responded with a forced smile, and took up the spare gun with an expression of countenance which a metaphysical rook, impressed with a foreboding of his approaching death by violence, may be supposed to assume. It might have been keenness, but it looked remarkably like misery.

The old gentleman nodded; and two ragged boys who had been marshaled to the spot forthwith commenced climbing up two of the trees.

"What are those lads for?" inquired Mr. Pickwick abruptly. He was rather alarmed, for he was not quite certain but that the distress of the agricultural interest, about which he had often heard a great deal, might have compelled the small boys attached to the soil, to earn a precarious and hazardous subsistence by making marks of themselves for inexperienced sportsmen.

"Only to start the game," replied Mr. Wardle, laughing.

"To what?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, in plain English, to frighten the rooks."

"Oh! Is that all?"

"You are satisfied?"

"Quite."

"Very well. Shall I begin?"

"If you please," said Mr. Winkle, glad of any respite.

"Stand aside, then. Now for it."

The boy shouted, and shook a branch with a nest on it. Half a dozen young rooks in violent conversation flew out to ask what the matter was. The old gentleman fired by way of reply. Down fell one bird, and off flew the others.

"Now, Mr. Winkle," said the host, reloading his own gun, "Fire away."

Mr. Winkle advanced, and leveled his gun. Mr. Pickwick and his friends cowered involuntarily to escape damage from the heavy fall of rooks which they felt certain would be occasioned by the devastating barrel of their friend. There was a solemn pause — a shout — a flapping of wings — a faint click.

"Hallo!" said the old gentleman.

"Won't it go?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Missed fire," said Mr. Winkle, who was very pale, probably from disappointment.

"Odd," said the old gentleman, taking the gun. "Never knew one of them to miss fire before. Why, I don't see anything of the cap."

"Bless my soul," said Mr. Winkle. "I declare, I forgot the cap!"

The slight omission was rectified. Mr. Pickwick crouched again. Mr. Winkle stepped forward with an air of determination and resolution; and Mr. Tupman looked out from behind a tree. The

boy shouted; — four birds flew out. Mr. Winkle fired. There was a scream as of an individual — not a rook — in corporeal anguish. Mr. Tupman had saved the lives of innumerable unoffending birds, by receiving a portion of the charge in his left arm.

To describe the confusion that ensued would be impossible. To tell how Mr. Pickwick in the first transports of his emotion called Mr. Winkle "Wretch!" how Mr. Tupman lay prostrate on the ground; and how Mr. Winkle knelt horror-stricken beside him; how Mr. Tupman called distractedly upon some feminine Christian name, and then opened first one eye, and then the other, and then fell back and shut them both; — all this would be as difficult to describe in detail as it would be to depict the gradual recovering of the unfortunate individual, the binding up of his arm with pocket-handkerchiefs, and the conveying him back by slow degrees supported by the arms of his anxious friends.

A PICKWICKIAN EXCURSION[1]

"Now, about Manor Farm," said Mr. Pickwick. "How shall we go?"

"We had better consult the waiter, perhaps," said Mr. Tupman, and the waiter was summoned accordingly.

"Dingley Dell, gentlemen — fifteen miles, gentlemen — cross road — post-chaise, sir?"

"Post-chaise won't hold more than two," said Mr. Pickwick.

"True, sir — beg your pardon, sir. — Very nice four-wheeled chaise, sir — seat for two behind — one in front for the gentleman that drives — oh, beg your pardon, sir — that'll only hold three."

"What's to be done?" said Mr. Snodgrass.

"Perhaps one of the gentlemen would like to ride, sir," suggested the waiter, looking towards Mr. Winkle. "Very good saddle horses, sir, — any of Mr. Wardle's men coming to Rochester, bring 'em back, sir."

"The very thing," said Mr. Pickwick. "Winkle, will you go on horseback?"

Now Mr. Winkle did entertain considerable misgivings in the very lowest recesses of his own heart, relative to his equestrian skill; but, as

[1] The members of the Pickwick Club are about to visit Mr. Wardle, an old gentleman who lives on his estate in the country.

he would not have them even suspected on any account, he replied at once with great hardihood, "Certainly. I should enjoy it of all things."

Mr. Winkle had rushed upon his fate; there was no resource. "Let them be at the door by eleven," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very well, sir," replied the waiter.

The waiter retired; the breakfast concluded; and the travelers ascended to their respective bedrooms, to prepare a change of clothing to take with them on their approaching expedition.

Mr. Pickwick had made his preliminary arrangements, and was looking over the coffee-room blinds at the passengers in the street, when the waiter entered, and announced that the chaise was ready — an announcement which the vehicle itself confirmed by forthwith appearing before the coffee-room blinds aforesaid.

It was a curious little green box on four wheels, with a low place like a wine bin for two behind, and an elevated perch for one in front, drawn by an immense brown horse, displaying great symmetry of bone. A hostler stood near, holding by the bridle another immense horse — apparently a near relative of the animal in the chaise — ready saddled for Mr. Winkle.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Pickwick, as they stood upon the pavement while the coats were being put in. "Bless my soul! who 's to drive? I never thought of that."

A PICKWICKIAN EXCURSION

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"Oh! you, of course," said Mr. Tupman.

"Of course," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"I!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Not the slightest fear, sir," interposed the hostler. "Warrant him quiet, sir; a hinfant in arms might drive him."

"He don't shy, does he?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Shy, sir? — He wouldn't shy if he was to meet a vaggin-load of monkeys, with their tails burnt off."

The last recommendation was indisputable. Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass got into the bin; Mr. Pickwick ascended to his perch, and deposited his feet on a floor-clothed shelf, erected beneath it for that purpose.

"Now, shiny Villiam," said the hostler to the deputy hostler, "give the gen'lm'n the ribbins." "Shiny Villiam" — so called, probably, from his sleek hair and oily countenance — placed the reins in Mr. Pickwick's left hand; and the upper hostler thrust a whip into his right.

"Wo-o!" cried Mr. Pickwick, as the tall quadruped evinced a decided inclination to back into the coffee-room window.

"Wo-o!" echoed Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass, from the bin.

"Only his playfulness, gen'lm'n," said the head hostler, encouragingly: "just kitch hold on him, Villiam." The deputy restrained the animal's

impetuosity, and the principal ran to assist Mr. Winkle in mounting.

"T' other side, sir, if you please."

"Blowed if the gen'lm'n worn't a gettin' up on the wrong side!" whispered a grinning post-boy, to the inexpressibly gratified waiter.

Mr. Winkle, thus instructed, climbed into his saddle, with about as much difficulty as he would have experienced in getting up the side of a first-rate man-of-war.

"All right?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, with an inward presentiment that it was all wrong.

"All right," replied Mr. Winkle faintly.

"Let 'em go," cried the hostler, — "Hold him in, sir;" and away went the chaise, and the saddle-horse, with Mr. Pickwick on the box of the one, and Mr. Winkle on the back of the other, to the delight and gratification of the whole inn yard.

"What makes him go sideways?" said Mr. Snodgrass in the bin to Mr. Winkle in the saddle.

"I can't imagine," replied Mr. Winkle. His horse was going up the street in the most mysterious manner — side first, with his head towards one side of the way, and his tail to the other.

Mr. Pickwick had no leisure to observe either this or any other particular, the whole of his faculties being concentrated in the management of the animal attached to the chaise, who displayed various peculiarities, highly interesting to

a bystander, but by no means equally amusing to any one seated behind him. Besides constantly jerking his head up, in a very unpleasant and uncomfortable manner, and tugging at the reins to an extent which rendered it a matter of great difficulty for Mr. Pickwick to hold them, he had a singular propensity for darting suddenly every now and then to the side of the road, then stopping short, and then rushing forward for some minutes, at a speed which it was wholly impossible to control.

"What *can* he mean by this?" said Mr. Snodgrass, when the horse had executed this manœuvre for the twentieth time.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Tupman; "it *looks* very much like shying, don't it?"

Mr. Snodgrass was about to reply, when he was interrupted by a shout from Mr. Pickwick.

"Woo!" said that gentleman, "I have dropped my whip!"

"Winkle," cried Mr. Snodgrass, as the equestrian came trotting up on the tall horse, with his hat over his eyes, and shaking all over, as if he would shake to pieces with the violence of the exercise, "pick up the whip, there 's a good fellow." Mr. Winkle pulled at the bridle of the tall horse till he was black in the face; and having at length succeeded in stopping him, dismounted, handed the whip to Mr. Pickwick, and grasping the reins, prepared to remount.

Now whether the tall horse, in the natural playfulness of his disposition, was desirous of having a little innocent recreation with Mr. Winkle, or whether it occurred to him that he could perform the journey as much to his own satisfaction without a rider as with one, are points upon which, of course, we can arrive at no definite conclusion. By whatever motives the animal was actuated, certain it was that Mr. Winkle had no sooner touched the reins, than he slipped them over his head, and darted backward to their full length.

"Poor fellow," said Mr. Winkle, soothingly, — "poor fellow — good old horse." The "poor fellow" was proof against flattery: the more Mr. Winkle tried to get nearer him, the more he sidled away; and notwithstanding all kinds of coaxing and wheedling, there were Mr. Winkle and the horse going round and round each other for ten minutes, at the end of which time each was at precisely the same distance from the other as when they first commenced — an unsatisfactory sort of thing under any circumstances, but particularly so in a lonely road, where no assistance could be procured.

"What am I to do?" shouted Mr. Winkle, after the dodging had been prolonged for a considerable time. "What am I to do? I can't get on him."

"You had better lead him till we come to

a turnpike," replied Mr. Pickwick from the chaise.

"But he won't come!" roared Mr. Winkle. "Do come and hold him."

Mr. Pickwick was the very personification of kindness and humanity: he threw the reins on the horse's back, and having descended from his seat, carefully drew the chaise into the hedge, lest anything should come along the road, and stepped back to the assistance of his distressed companion, leaving Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the vehicle.

The horse no sooner beheld Mr. Pickwick advancing towards him, with the chaise whip in his hand, than he exchanged the rotary motion in which he had previously indulged, for a retrograde movement of so very determined a character that it at once drew Mr. Winkle, who was still at the end of the bridle, at a rather quicker rate than fast walking, in the direction from which they had just come.

Mr. Pickwick ran to his assistance; but the faster Mr. Pickwick ran forward, the faster the horse ran backward. There was great scraping of feet and kicking up of the dust; and at last Mr. Winkle, his arms being nearly pulled out of their sockets, fairly let go his hold. The horse paused, stared, shook his head, turned round, and quietly trotted home to Rochester, leaving Mr. Winkle and Mr. Pickwick gazing on each other with

countenances of blank dismay. A rattling noise at a little distance attracted their attention. They looked up.

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the agonized Mr. Pickwick, "there's the other horse running away!"

It was but too true. The animal was startled by the noise, and the reins were on his back. The result may be guessed. He tore off with the four-wheeled chaise behind him, and Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass in the four-wheeled chaise.

The heat was a short one. Mr. Tupman threw himself into the hedge, Mr. Snodgrass followed his example; the horse dashed the four-wheeled chaise against a wooden bridge, separated the wheels from the body, and the bin from the perch, and finally stood stock-still, to gaze upon the ruin he had made.

MR. PICKWICK'S SLIDE

MEANWHILE Mr. Weller and the fat boy, having by their joint endeavors, cut out a slide, were exercising themselves thereupon in a very masterly and brilliant manner. . . .

It was a good long slide, and there was something in the motion which Mr. Pickwick, who was very cold with standing still, could not help envying.

"It looks a nice warm exercise, doesn't it?" he inquired of Wardle.

"Ah, it does indeed!" replied Wardle. "Do you slide?"

"I used to do so on the gutters, when I was a boy," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Try it now," said Wardle.

"Oh, do, please, Mr. Pickwick!" cried all the ladies.

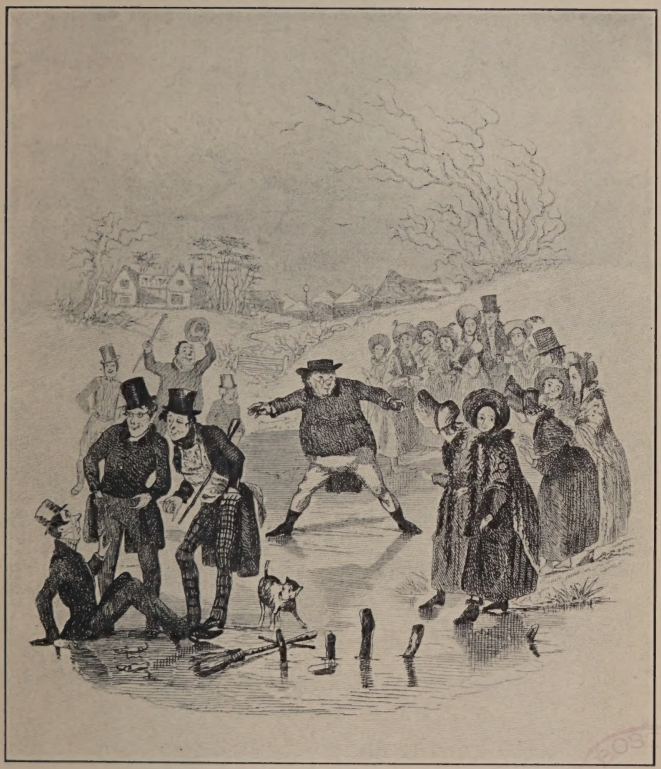
"I should be very happy to afford you any amusement," replied Mr. Pickwick, "but I haven't done such a thing these thirty years."

"Pooh! pooh! Nonsense!" said Wardle, dragging off his skates with the impetuosity which characterized all his proceedings. "Here; I'll keep you company; come along!" And away went the good-tempered old fellow down the slide, with a rapidity which came very close upon Mr. Weller and beat the fat boy all to nothing.

Mr. Pickwick paused, considered, pulled off his gloves and put them in his hat, took two or three short runs, balked himself as often, and at last took another run, and went slowly and gravely down the slide, with his feet about a yard and a quarter apart, amidst the gratified shouts of all the spectators.

"Keep the pot a-bilin', sir!" said Sam: and down went Wardle again, and then Mr. Pickwick, and then Sam, and then Mr. Winkle, and then Mr. Bob Sawyer, and then the fat boy, and then Mr. Snodgrass, following closely upon each other's heels, and running after each other with as much eagerness as if all their future prospects in life depended on their expedition.

It was the most intensely interesting thing to observe the manner in which Mr. Pickwick performed his share in the ceremony: to watch the torture and anxiety with which he viewed the person behind gaining upon him at the imminent hazard of tripping him up; to see him gradually expend the painful force he had put on at first, and turn slowly round on the slide, with his face toward the point from which he had started; to contemplate the joyful smile which mantled on his face when he had accomplished the distance, and the eagerness with which he turned round when he had done so and ran after his predecessor, his black gaiters tripping pleasantly through the snow and his eyes beaming cheerfulness and gladness through his spectacles.



MR. PICKWICK'S SLIDE

And when he was knocked down (which happened upon the average every third round) it was the most invigorating sight that can possibly be imagined to see him gather up his hat, gloves, and handkerchief, with a glowing countenance, and resume his station in the rank with an ardor and enthusiasm that nothing could abate.

The sport was at its height, the sliding was at the quickest, the laughter was at the loudest, when a sharp, smart crack was heard. There was a quick rush toward the bank, a wild scream from the ladies, and a shout from Mr. Tupman. A large mass of ice disappeared, the water bubbled up over it; Mr. Pickwick's hat, gloves and handkerchief were floating on the surface; and this was all of Mr. Pickwick that anybody could see.

Dismay and anguish were depicted on every countenance, while Mr. Tupman, by way of rendering the promptest assistance, and at the same time conveying to any persons who might be within hearing, the clearest possible notion of the catastrophe, ran off across the country at his utmost speed, screaming, "Fire!" with all his might.

It was at this moment, when Mr. Wardle and Sam Weller were approaching the hole with cautious steps, that a face, head, and shoulders emerged from beneath the water and disclosed the features and spectacles of Mr. Pickwick.

"Keep yourself up for an instant — for only one instant!" bawled Mr. Snodgrass.

"Yes, do; let me implore you — for my sake!" roared Mr. Winkle, deeply affected. The adjuration was rather unnecessary, the probability being, that if Mr. Pickwick had declined to keep himself up for anybody's sake, it would have occurred to him that he might as well do so for his own.

"Do you feel the bottom there, old fellow?" said Wardle.

"Yes, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick, wringing the water from his head and face and gasping for breath. "I fell upon my back. I couldn't get on my feet at first."

The clay upon so much of Mr. Pickwick's coat as was yet visible, bore testimony to the accuracy of this statement; and as the fears of the spectators were still further relieved by the fat boy's suddenly recollecting that the water was nowhere more than five feet deep, prodigies of valor were performed to get him out.

After a vast quantity of splashing and cracking and struggling, Mr. Pickwick was at length fairly extricated from his unpleasant position and once more stood on dry land.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

In 1840 Mr. Dickens commenced *Master Humphrey's Clock* which afterwards became a part of *The Old Curiosity Shop.* Of all the child characters depicted by Dickens, this of Little Nell is most noble, beautiful and affecting. Her devotion to her grandfather, her kindness, her gentleness and patience are everywhere admired.

The evil effects of gambling are depicted with great force. The old grandfather, maddened with the infatuation, seeks by every effort to gain money so that his little granddaughter may some day be rich. Helpless and pitiful are his hopes and desires; yet, through his repeated failures, he is unflinchingly sustained, directed and loved by his Little Nell. The death of Little Nell is the most pathetic and touching of the author's serious passages.

The tale brings out many adventures; old churches and churchyards, as well as beautiful rural scenes are vividly described.

The selections are from Chapters I, XII, and LXXI respectively.

NELL AND HER GRANDFATHER

ALTHOUGH I am an old man, night is generally my time for walking. In the summer I often leave home early in the morning and roam about the fields and lanes all day, or even escape for days or weeks together; but, saving in the country, I seldom go out until after dark, though Heaven be thanked, I love its light, and feel the cheerfulness it sheds upon the earth, as much as any creature living. . . .

One night I had roamed into the city,[1] and was

[1] London, England.

walking on in my usual way, when I was arrested by an enquiry, which seemed to be addressed to myself, and in a soft, sweet voice that struck me very pleasantly. I turned hastily round and found at my elbow a pretty little girl, who begged to be directed to a certain street in quite another quarter of the town.

"It is a very long way from here," said I, "my child."

"I know that, sir," she replied, timidly, "for I came from there to-night."

"Alone?" said I, in some surprise.

"Oh, yes; I don't mind that; but I am a little frightened now, for I have lost my road." . . .

"Come," said I, "I'll take you there."

She put her hand in mine as confidingly as if she had known me from her cradle, and we trudged away together. . . . I observed that every now and then she stole a curious look at my face as if to make quite sure that I was not deceiving her, and that these glances (very sharp and keen they were too) seemed to increase her confidence at every repetition.

Though more scantily attired than she might have been, she was dressed with perfect neatness, and betrayed no marks of poverty or neglect.

"Who has sent you so far by yourself?" said I.

"Somebody who is very kind to me, sir."

"And what have you been doing?"

"That I must not tell," said the child, firmly.

There was something in the manner of this reply which caused me to look at the little creature with an involuntary expression of surprise ; for I wondered what kind of errand it might be that occasioned her to be prepared for questioning. Her quick eye seemed to read my thoughts, for as it met mine she added that there was no harm in what she had been doing, but it was a great secret— a secret which she did not even know herself.

This was said with no appearance of cunning or deceit, but with an unsuspicious frankness that bore the impress of truth. She walked on as before, growing more familiar with me as we proceeded and talking cheerfully by the way; but she said no more about her home, beyond remarking that we were going quite a new road and asking if it were a short one.

While we were thus engaged, I revolved in my mind a hundred different explanations of the riddle and rejected them every one. I really felt ashamed to take advantage of the ingenuousness or grateful feeling of the child for the purpose of gratifying my curiosity.

There was no reason, however, why I should refrain from seeing the person who had inconsiderately sent her to so great a distance by night and alone, and, as it was not improbable that if she found herself near home she might take farewell of me and deprive me of the opportunity, I

avoided the most frequented ways and took the most intricate; and thus it was not until we arrived in the street itself that she knew where we were.

Clapping her hands with pleasure and running on before me a short distance, my little acquaintance stopped at a door, and remaining on the step till I came up, knocked at it when I joined her.

A part of this door was of glass unprotected by any shutter. When she had knocked twice or thrice there was a noise as if some person were moving inside, and at length a faint light appeared through the glass which, as it approached very slowly, — the bearer having to make his way through a great many scattered articles, — enabled me to see, both what kind of person it was who advanced, and what kind of place it was through which he came.

He was a little old man with long gray hair, whose face and figure as he held the light above his head and looked before him as he approached, I could plainly see. Though much altered by age, I fancied I could recognize in his spare and slender form something of the delicate mould which I had observed in the child. Their bright blue eyes were certainly alike, but his face was so deeply furrowed and so very full of care, that here all resemblance ceased.

The place through which he made his way at

leisure was one of those receptacles for old and curious things which seem to crouch in odd corners of the town, and to hide their musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust. . . . The haggard aspect of the little old man was wonderfully suited to the place; he might have groped among old churches and tombs and deserted houses and gathered all the spoils with his own hands. There was nothing in the whole collection but was in keeping with himself; nothing that looked older or more worn than he.

As he turned the key in the lock, he surveyed me with some astonishment, which was not diminished when he looked from me to my companion. The door being opened, the child addressed him as grandfather, and told him the little story of our companionship.

"Why, bless thee, child," said the old man, patting her on the head, "how could'st thou miss thy way? What if I had lost thee, Nell?"

"I would have found my way back to *you*, grandfather," said the child boldly; "never fear."

The old man kissed her, and then turned to me and begged me to walk in. I did so. The door was closed and locked. Preceding me with the light, he led me through the place I had already seen from without, into a small sitting room behind, in which there was another door opening into a kind of closet, where I saw a little bed that

a fairy might have slept in, it looked so very small and was so prettily arranged.

The child took a candle and tripped into this little room, leaving the old man and me together.

"You must be tired, sir," said he, as he placed a chair near the fire; "how can I thank you?"

"By taking more care of your grandchild another time, my good friend," I replied.

"More care!" said the old man in a shrill voice, "more care of Nelly! Why, who ever loved a child as I love Nell?"

He said this with such evident surprise that I was perplexed what answer to make. . . .

"I don't think you consider —" I began.

"I don't consider!" cried the old man interrupting me, "I don't consider her! Ah, how little you know of the truth! Little Nelly! Little Nelly!"

It would be impossible for any man, I care not what his form of speech might be, to express more affection than the dealer in curiosities did, in those four words. I waited for him to speak again, but he rested his chin upon his hand and, shaking his head twice or thrice, fixed his eyes upon the fire. . . .

"Ah!" said the old man at length, turning to me with a sigh, as if I had spoken to him but that moment, "you don't know what you say when you tell me that I don't consider her."

"You must not attach too great weight to a re-

mark founded upon first appearances, my friend," said I.

"No," returned the old man thoughtfully, "no. Come hither, Nell."

The little girl hastened from her seat, and put her arm about his neck.

"Do I love thee, Nell?" said he. "Say — do I love thee, Nell, or no?"

The child only answered by her caresses, and laid her head upon his breast.

"Why dost thou sob," said the grandfather, pressing her close to him and glancing towards me. "Is it because thou know'st I love thee, and dost not like that I should seem to doubt it by my question? Well, well — then let us say I love thee dearly."

"Indeed, indeed you do," replied the child with great earnestness. . . .

"She is poor now," said the old man, patting the child's cheek, "but I say again that the time is coming when she shall be rich. It has been a long time coming, but it must come at last; a very long time, but it must surely come. It has come to other men who do nothing but waste and riot. When *will* it come to me!"

"I am very happy as I am, grandfather," said the child.

"Tush, tush!" returned the old man, "thou dost not know — how should'st thou!" Then he muttered again between his teeth, "The time

must come, I am very sure it must. It will be all the better for coming late." And then he sighed and fell into his former musing state, and, still holding the child between his knees, appeared to be insensible to everything around him.

By this time it wanted but a few minutes of midnight and I rose to go, which recalled him to himself. . . . He said, "I have n't seemed to thank you enough for what you have done to-night, but I do thank you humbly and heartily; and so does she, and her thanks are better worth than mine. I should be sorry that you went away and thought I was unmindful of your goodness, or careless of her — I am not indeed." . . .

I turned to put on an outer coat which I had thrown off on entering the room, purposing to say no more. I was surprised to see the child standing patiently by with a cloak upon her arm, and in her hand a hat and stick.

"Those are not mine, my dear," said I.

"No," returned the child quietly, "they are grandfather's."

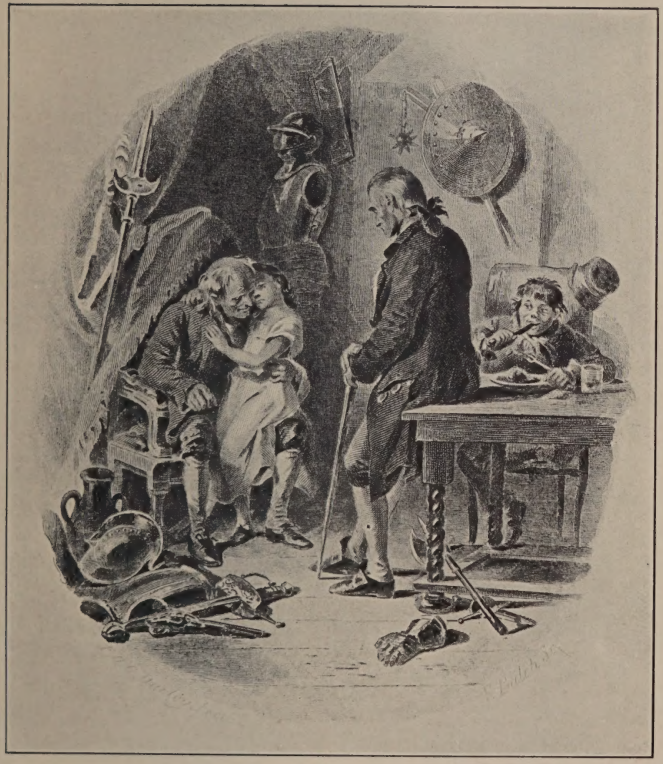
"But he is not going out to-night."

"Oh yes, he is," said the child, with a smile.

"And what becomes of you, my pretty one?"

"Me? I stay here, of course. I always do."

I looked in astonishment towards the old man, but he was, or feigned to be, busied in the arrangement of his dress. From him I looked back



NELL AND HER GRANDFATHER

to the slight gentle figure of the child. Alone! In that gloomy place all the long, dreary night!

She evinced no consciousness of my surprise, but cheerfully helped the old man with his cloak, and, when he was ready, took a candle to light us out.

When we reached the door, the child, setting down the candle, turned to say good-night and raised her face to kiss me. Then she ran to the old man, who folded her in his arms and bade God bless her.

"Sleep soundly, Nell," he said in a low voice, "and angels guard thy bed! Do not forget thy prayers, my sweet."

"No indeed," answered the child fervently, "they make me feel so happy."

With this, they separated. The child opened the door and with another farewell, whose clear and tender note I have recalled a thousand times, held it until we had passed out. The old man paused a moment while it was gently closed and fastened on the inside, and, satisfied that this was done, walked on at a slow pace.

At the street corner he stopped, and, regarding me with a troubled countenance, said that our ways were widely different and that he must take his leave. I would have spoken, but summoning up more alacrity than might have been expected in one of his appearance, he hurried away.

NELL AND HER GRANDFATHER DESERT THE TOWN

THE child's heart beat high with hope and confidence. She had no thought of hunger, or cold, or thirst, or suffering. She saw in this but a return of the simple pleasures they had once enjoyed, a relief from the gloomy solitude in which she had lived, an escape from the heartless people by whom she had been surrounded in her late time of trial, the restoration of the old man's health and peace, and a life of tranquil happiness. Sun, and stream, and meadow, and summer days, shone brightly in her view, and there was no dark tint in all the sparkling picture.

The old man had slept for some hours soundly in his bed, and she was busily engaged preparing for their flight. There were a few articles of clothing for herself to carry, and a few for him; old garments, such as became their fallen fortunes, laid out to wear; and a staff to support his feeble steps, put ready for his use. But this was not all her task, for she must now revisit the old rooms for the last time.

And how different the parting with them was from any she had expected, and most of all from that which she had often pictured to herself! How could she ever have thought of bidding them farewell in triumph, when the recollection of the

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many hours she had passed among them rose to her swelling heart, and made her feel the wish a cruelty: lonely and sad though many of those hours had been! She sat down at the window where she had spent so many evenings — darker far than this — and every thought of hope and cheerfulness that had occurred to her in that place came vividly upon her mind, and blotted out all its dull and mournful associations in an instant.

Her own little room too, where she had so often knelt down and prayed at night, prayed for the time which she hoped was dawning now; the little room where she had slept so peacefully and dreamed such pleasant dreams; it was hard not to be able to glance round it once more, and to be forced to leave it without one kind look or grateful tear. There were some trifles there, — poor, useless things, — that she would have liked to take away; but this was impossible.

This brought to her mind her bird, her poor bird, who hung there yet. She wept bitterly for the loss of this little creature, until the idea occurred to her — she did not know how or why it came into her head — that it might by some means fall into the hands of Kit,[1] who would keep it for her sake, and think perhaps that she had left it behind in the hope that he might have it, and as an assurance that she

[1] An errand boy who had been employed by the grandfather.

was grateful to him. She was calmed and comforted by the thought, and went to rest with a lighter heart.

From many dreams of rambling through light and sunny places, but with some vague object unattained which ran indistinctly through them all, she awoke to find that it was yet night, and that the stars were shining brightly in the sky. At length the day began to glimmer, and the stars to grow pale and dim. As soon as she was sure of this, she arose and dressed herself for the journey.

The old man was yet asleep, and as she was unwilling to disturb him, she left him to slumber until the sun rose. He was anxious that they should leave the house without a minute's loss of time, and was soon ready.

The child took him by the hand and they trod lightly and cautiously down the stairs, trembling whenever a board creaked, and often stopping to listen. The old man had forgotten a kind of wallet which contained the light burden he had to carry, and the going back a few steps to fetch it seemed an interminable delay.

At last they reached the passage on the ground-floor. . . . They got the door open without noise, and passing into the street, stood still.

"Which way?" said the child.

The old man looked irresolutely and helplessly, first at her, then to the right and left, then at her

again, and shook his head. It was plain that she was thenceforth his guide and leader. The child felt it, but had no doubts or misgivings, and putting her hand in his, gently led him away.

It was the beginning of a day in June; the deep blue sky unsullied by a cloud, and teeming with brilliant light. The streets were as yet nearly free from passengers, the houses and shops were closed, and the healthful air of morning fell, like breath from angels, on the sleeping town.

The old man and the child passed on through the glad silence, elate with hope and pleasure. They were alone together once again; every object was bright and fresh; nothing reminded them, otherwise than by contrast, of the monotony and constraint they had left behind; church towers and steeples, frowning and dark at other times, now shone and dazzled in the sun; each humble nook and corner rejoiced in light; and the sky, dimmed by excessive distance, shed its placid smile on everything beneath.

Forth from the city, while it yet slumbered, went the two poor adventurers, wandering they knew not whither.

THE DEATH OF LITTLE NELL

SHE was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favor. "When I die, put something near me that loved the light, and had the sky above it always." Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead. Her little bird — a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed — was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless forever.

Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born, imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled

upon that same sweet face; it had passed like a dream through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace-fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death.

The old man held one languid arm in his, and had the small hand tightly folded to his breast, for warmth. It was the hand she had stretched out to him with her last smile — the hand that had led him on through all their wanderings. Ever and anon he pressed it to his lips; then hugged it to his breast again, murmuring that it was warmer now; and as he said it he looked, in agony, to those who stood around, as if imploring them to help her.

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast — the garden she had tended — the eyes she had gladdened — the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour — the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday — could know her no more.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A Christmas Carol was published in 1843. It was the first and considered the best of a series of Christmas stories. By these Christmas stories of peace, good-will, forgiveness and generosity, it is said "he softened the hearts of a whole generation." He awakened pity in the hearts of millions of people by these books which had a wide influence. His stories of Christmas led many a hard-hearted person to keep Christmas with acts of charity and helpfulness to the poor.

Mr. Dickens said of this work, "My purpose was, in a whimsical kind of mask, which the good humor of the season justified, to awaken some loving and forbearing thoughts, never out of season, in a Christian land."

Thackeray wrote of the *Christmas Carol*, "It seems to me a national benefit, and to every man or woman who reads it a personal kindness."

Kate Field said of it: "Hungry ears have listened to no better hymn of praise; hungry eyes have feasted on no truer or more loving counsel."

The selections are from Staves One, Two, and Three, respectively.

SCROOGE

I

MARLEY was dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it; and Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don't mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as about the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile, and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country's done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, and sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnized it with an undoubted bargain.

The mention of Marley's funeral brings me back to the point I started from. There is no doubt that Marley was dead. This must be distinctly understood, or nothing wonderful can come of the story I am going to relate. If we were not perfectly convinced that Hamlet's Father died before the play began, there would be nothing more remarkable in his taking a stroll at night, in an easterly wind, upon his own ramparts, than there would be in any other middle-aged gentle-

man rashly turning out after dark in a breezy spot — say Saint Paul's Churchyard for instance — literally to astonish his son's weak mind.

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. The firm was known as Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names: it was all the same to him.

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue, and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days, and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

External heat and cold had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, nor wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow more intent upon its purpose, no pelting rain less open to entreaty.

Foul weather did n't know where to have him. The heaviest rain, and snow, and hail, and sleet could boast of the advantage over him in only one respect. They often "came down" handsomely, and Scrooge never did.

Nobody ever stopped him in the street to say, with gladsome looks, "My dear Scrooge, how are you? When will you come to see me?" No beggars implored him to bestow a trifle; no children asked him what it was o'clock; no man or woman ever once in all his life inquired the way to such and such a place, of Scrooge. Even the blind men's dogs appeared to know him; and when they saw him coming on, would tug their owners into doorways and up courts, and then would wag their tails as though they said, "No eye at all is better than an evil eye, dark master!"

But what did Scrooge care? It was the very thing he liked. To edge his way along the crowded paths of life, warning all human sympathy to keep its distance was what the knowing ones call "nuts" to Scrooge.

II

Once upon a time — of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve — old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather, foggy withal, and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their

breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to keep them warm.

The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already; it had not been light all day; and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighboring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might keep an eye upon his clerk, who, in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he could n't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room, and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a man of strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful voice. It was the voice of

Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him so quickly that this was the first intimation of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge. "Humbug!"

He had so heated himself with walking, this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his face was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath smoked again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You don't mean that, I am sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have you to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're poor enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew, gaily. "What right have you to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're rich enough."

Scrooge, having no better answer ready on the spur of the moment, said "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug!"

"Don't be cross, uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in such a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon merry Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for paying bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year older, but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and having every item in 'em through a round dozen of months presented dead against you? If I could work my will," said Scrooge, indignantly, "every idiot who

goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart. He should!"

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christmas in your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you don't keep it."

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much good may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

"There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say," returned the nephew, "Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round — apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that — as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they were really fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has*

done me good, and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk in the tank involuntarily applauded. Becoming immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire, and extinguished the last frail spark forever.

"Let me hear another sound from *you*," said Scrooge, "and you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation! You're quite a powerful speaker, sir," he added, turning to his nephew. "I wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow."

Scrooge said that he would see him — yes, indeed he did. He went the whole length of the expression, and said that he would see him in that extremity first.

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge, as if that were the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a merry Christmas. "Good-afternoon!"

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that happened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good-afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot we be friends?"

"Good-afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart to find you so resolute. We have never had any quarrel to which I have been a party. But I have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I 'll keep my Christmas humor to the last. So A Merry Christmas, uncle!"

"Good-afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And a Happy New Year!"

"Good-afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithstanding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings of the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than Scrooge, for he returned them cordially.

"There 's another fellow," muttered Scrooge, who overheard him, "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a week, and a wife and family, talking about a merry Christmas. I 'll retire to Bedlam."

III

This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let in two other people. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, and now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had books and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, referring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. Scrooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years," Scrooge replied. "He died seven years ago this very night."

"We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his surviving partner," said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was, for they had been two kindred spirits. At the ominous word "liberality" Scrooge frowned, and shook his head, and handed the credentials back.

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the gentleman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge, "are they still in operation?"

"They are. Still," returned the gentleman, "I wish I could say they were not."

"The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigor, then?" said Scrooge.

"Both very busy, sir."

"Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them

in their useful course," said Scrooge. "I 'm very glad to hear it."

"Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Christian cheer of mind or body to the multitude," returned the gentleman, "a few of us are endeavoring to raise a fund to buy the poor some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose this time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly felt, and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied.

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "Since you ask me what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned; they cost me enough; and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides — excuse me — I don't know that."

"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough for a man to understand his own business, and not to interfere with other people's.

Mine occupies me constantly. Good-afternoon, gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their point, the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labors with an improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper than was usual with him.

FEZZIWIG'S BALL[1]

THE Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door and asked Scrooge if he knew it.

"Know it!" said Scrooge. "Was n't I apprenticed here?"

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk that if he had been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement: —

"Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands, adjusted his capacious waistcoat, laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence, and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

"Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

[1] The Ghost of Christmas Past is showing to Scrooge various scenes with which he had been familiar in his youth.

"Yo ho, my boys," said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up," cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, "before a man can say Jack Robinson!"

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with those shutters — one, two, three — had 'em up in their places — four, five, six — barred and pinned 'em — seven, eight, nine — and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

"Hilli-ho!" cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!"

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life forevermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ballroom as you would desire to see on a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the lofty desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In

came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business.

In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master, trying to hide himself behind the girl from the next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her mistress.

In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couples at once; hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them!

When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter especially provided for that purpose. But scorning rest upon his reappearance, he instantly began again, though there

were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter; and he were a brand-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus,[1] and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince pies, and plenty of beer.

But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pairs of partners; people who were not to be trifled with, people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many — ah, four times — old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to *her*, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that 's not high praise, tell me higher, and I 'll use it.

A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You could n't have predicted,

[1] *Negus:* a sort of beverage like lemonade with wine and spices in it.

at any given time, what would become of them next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, both hands to your partner, bow and courtesy, corkscrew, thread-the-needle, and back again to your place; then Fezziwig "cut"[1] — cut so deftly that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds, which were under a counter in the back shop.

[1] *Cut:* a dance involving quick, intricate steps.

FEZZIWIG'S BALL

CHRISTMAS DINNER AT BOB CRATCHIT'S[1]

PERHAPS it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showing off his power, or else it was his own kind, generous, hearty nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straight to Scrooge's clerk; for there he went, and took Scrooge with him, holding to his robe. And on the threshold of the door the Spirit smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with the sprinklings of his torch. . . . The Ghost of Christmas Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out but poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which are cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth, assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave in ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into the saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrous shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and heir in honor of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself so gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable Parks.

And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing in, screaming that outside the baker's

[1] The Ghost of Christmas Present conducts Scrooge to visit the home of his clerk on Christmas Day.

they had smelt the goose, and known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of sage and onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and exalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, although his collar nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow potatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let out and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs. Cratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't as late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she spoke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. "Hurrah! There's *such* a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" said Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her shawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, "and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs. Cratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, Lord bless ye!"

"No, no! There's father coming," cried the two young Cratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged his daughter to his heart's content.

"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped

the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant for them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk and blind men see."

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembled more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool before the fire; . . . while Master Peter and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course — and in truth it was something very like it in that house.

Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped.

BOB CRATCHIT AND TINY TIM

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by apple-sauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular were steeped in sage and onion to the eyebrows!

But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone — too nervous to bear witnesses — to take the pudding up and bring it in. Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over the wall of the back yard, and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose — a supposition at which

the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each other, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered — flushed, but smiling proudly — with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half a quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had her doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round

the hearth, in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass. . . . Two tumblers and a custard-cup without a handle. . . .

Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

AMERICAN NOTES

American Notes was published in 1842. This book was the literary result of Dickens's first visit to the United States. His observations upon the newly-visited country, and the people whom he had met, with other personages seen and heard about, are portrayed with friendliness and an exaggerated drollery. Dickens saw the crude and ludicrous in the characters he met as well as the situations he experienced. Many of the faults of the people in the United States were emphasized.

The selections are from Chapters I, II and XIV respectively.

THE HOUR OF SAILING

We are made fast alongside the packet, whose huge red funnel is smoking bravely, giving rich promise of serious intentions. Packing-cases, portmanteaus, carpet-bags, and boxes are already passed from hand to hand and hauled on board with breathless rapidity. The officers, smartly dressed, are at the gangway handing the passengers up the side, and hurrying the men.

In five minutes' time, the little steamer is utterly deserted, and the packet is beset and over-run by its late freight, who instantly pervade the whole ship, and are to be met with by dozens in every nook and corner, swarming down below with their own baggage and stumbling over other people's; disposing themselves comfortably in wrong cabins, and creating a most horrible con-

fusion by having to turn out again; madly bent upon opening locked doors, and on forcing a passage into all kinds of out-of-the-way places where there is no thoroughfare; sending wild stewards, with elfin hair, to and fro upon the breezy decks on unintelligible errands, impossible of execution; and, in short, creating the most extraordinary and bewildering tumult. . . .

What have we here? The captain's boat! and yonder the captain himself. Now, by all our hopes and wishes, the very man he ought to be! A well-made, tight-built, dapper little fellow, with a ruddy face, which is a letter of invitation to shake him by both hands at once, and with a clear, blue, honest eye that it does one good to see one's sparkling image in.

"Ring the bell!" "Ding, ding, ding!" the very bell is in a hurry. "Now for the shore — who's for the shore?" — "These gentlemen, I am sorry to say." They are away, and never said Good-by. Ah! now they wave it from the little boat. "Good-by! Good-by!" Three cheers from them; three more from us; three more from them; and they are gone.

To and fro, to and fro, to and fro again a hundred times! This waiting for the latest mail-bags is worse than all. If we could have gone off in the midst of that last burst, we should have started triumphantly; but to lie here two hours and more, in the damp fog, neither staying

at home nor going abroad, is letting one gradually down into the very depths of dullness and low spirits.

A speck in the mist, at last! That 's something. It is the boat we wait for! That 's more to the purpose. The captain appears on the paddle-box with his speaking-trumpet; the officers take their stations; all hands are on the alert; the flagging hopes of the passengers revive; the cooks pause in their savory work, and look out with faces full of interest.

The boat comes alongside; the bags are dragged in anyhow, and flung down for the moment anywhere. Three cheers more: and as the first one rings upon our ears, the vessel throbs like a strong giant that has just received the breath of life; the two great wheels turn fiercely round for the first time; and the noble ship, with wind and tide astern, breaks proudly through the lashed and foaming water.

A HEAD-WIND

It is the third morning. I am awakened out of my sleep by a dismal shriek from my wife, who demands to know whether there's any danger. I rouse myself and look out of bed. The water-jug is plunging and leaping like a lively dolphin; all the smaller articles are afloat, except my shoes, which are stranded on a carpet-bag, high and dry, like a couple of coal-barges. Suddenly I see them spring into the air, and behold the looking-glass, which is nailed to the wall, sticking fast upon the ceiling. At the same time the door entirely disappears, and a new one is opened in the floor. Then I begin to comprehend that the state room is standing on its head.

Before it is possible to make any arrangement compatible with this novel state of things, the ship rights. Before one can say "Thank Heaven!" she wrongs again. Before one can cry she *is* wrong, she seems to have started forward, and to be a creature actively running of its own accord, with broken knees and failing legs, through every variety of hole and pitfall, and stumbling constantly.

Before one can so much as wonder, she takes a high leap into the air. Before she has well done that, she takes a deep dive into the water. Before she has gained the surface, she throws a

somersault. The instant she is on her legs, she rushes backward. And so she goes on staggering, heaving, wrestling, leaping, diving, jumping, pitching, throbbing, rolling, and rocking: and going through all these movements, sometimes by turns, and sometimes all together: until one feels disposed to roar for mercy.

A steward passes. "Steward!" — "Sir?" — "What *is* the matter? What *do* you call this?" — "Rather a heavy sea on, sir, and a head-wind."

A head-wind! Imagine a human face upon the vessel's prow, with fifteen thousand Sampsons in one bent upon driving her back, and hitting her exactly between the eyes whenever she attempts to advance an inch. Imagine the ship herself, with every pulse and artery of her huge body swollen and bursting under this maltreatment, sworn to go on or die. Imagine the wind howling, the sea roaring, the rain beating; all in furious array against her.

Picture the sky both dark and wild, and the clouds, in fearful sympathy with the waves, making another ocean in the air. Add to all this, the clattering on deck and down below; the tread of hurried feet; the loud, hoarse shouts of seamen; the gurgling in and out of water through the scuppers;[1] with every now and then, the striking of a heavy sea upon the planks above, with

[1] *Scuppers:* openings cut through the waterways of a ship.

the deep, dead, heavy sound of thunder heard within a vault; — and there is the head-wind of that January morning. . . .

To say that all is grand, and all appalling and horrible in the last degree, is nothing. Words cannot express it. Thoughts cannot convey it. Only a dream can call it up again in all its fury, rage, and passion.

NIAGARA FALLS

We were at the foot of the American Fall. I could see an immense torrent of water tearing headlong down from some great height, but had no idea of shape, or situation, or anything but vague immensity.

When we were seated in the little ferry-boat, and were crossing the swollen river immediately before both cataracts, I began to feel what it was: but I was in a manner stunned, and unable to comprehend the vastness of the scene. It was not until I came on Table Rock, and looked — Great Heaven, on what a fall of bright-green water! — that it came upon me in its full might and majesty.

Then, when I felt how near to my Creator I was standing, the first effect, and the enduring one — instant and lasting — of that tremendous spectacle was peace. Peace of mind: tranquillity: calm recollections of the dead: great thoughts of eternal rest and happiness: nothing of gloom or terror. Niagara was at once stamped upon my heart, an image of beauty; to remain there, changeless and indelible, until its pulses cease to beat, forever.

Oh, how the strife and trouble of daily life receded from my view and lessened in the distance, during the ten memorable days we

passed on that enchanted ground! What voices spoke from out the thundering water; what faces, faded from the earth, looked out upon me from its gleaming depths; what heavenly promise glistened in those angels' tears, the drops of many hues, that showered around, and twined themselves about the gorgeous arches which the changing rainbows made! . . .

To wander to and fro all day, and see the cataracts from all points of view; to stand upon the edge of the great Horseshoe Fall, marking the hurried water gathering strength as it approached the verge, yet seeming, too, to pause before it shot into the gulf below; to gaze from the river's level up at the torrent as it came streaming down; to climb the neighboring heights and watch it through the trees, and see the wreathing water in the rapids hurrying on to take its fearful plunge; to linger in the shadow of the solemn rocks three miles below; watching the river as, stirred by no visible cause, it heaved and eddied and awoke the echoes, being troubled yet, far down beneath the surface, by its giant leap; to have Niagara before me, lighted by the sun and by the moon, red in the day's decline, and gray as evening slowly fell upon it; to look upon it every day, and wake up in the night and hear its ceaseless voice: this was enough.

I think in every quiet season now, still do those waters roll and leap, and roar and tumble, all day

long; still are the rainbows spanning them, a hundred feet below. Still when the sun is shining on them, do they shine and glow like molten gold. Still, when the day is gloomy, do they fall like snow, or seem to crumble away like the front of a great chalk cliff, or roll down the rock like dense white smoke.

But always does the mighty stream appear to die as it comes down, and always from its unfathomable grave arises that tremendous ghost of spray and mist which is never laid; which has haunted this place with the same dread solemnity since darkness brooded on the deep, and that first flood before the deluge — light — came rushing on creation at the word of God.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

David Copperfield appeared in 1850. Its success was immediately assured. Dickens said of it, "Of all my books, I like this the best."

In this novel are portrayed many of the varied experiences in Dickens's personal life. The story tells us of David Copperfield's experiences as a child, his early struggles and privations which at last ended in prosperity. In the book we find pathos and humor singularly combined. A host of characters are portrayed, all vividly described by the mind of a master. The story is in many respects autobiographic; for David Copperfield, like Dickens, was employed in a lawyer's office, then became a parliamentary reporter, and at last a successful novelist.

The persons mentioned in this narrative are: David Copperfield, who tells the story; his old schoolmate, James Steerforth; Ham Peggotty, a rough but noble young fisherman, and Little Em'ly, his sister by adoption. The scene is at the Yarmouth shore, in England.

The selection is from Chapter LV.

A SHIPWRECK

It was broad day — eight or nine o'clock; the storm was raging; and some one was knocking and calling at my door.

"What is the matter?" I cried.

"A wreck! Close by!"

I sprang out of bed, and asked, what wreck?

"A schooner, from Spain or Portugal, laden with fruit and wine. Make haste, sir, if you want to see her! It's thought, down on the beach, that she'll go to pieces any moment."

The excited voice went clamoring along the staircase; and I wrapped myself in my clothes as quickly as I could, and ran into the street.

Numbers of people were there before me, all running in one direction, to the beach. I ran the same way, outstripping a good many, and soon came facing the wild sea. . . .

In the difficulty of hearing anything but wind and waves, and in the crowd, and the unspeakable confusion, and my first breathless efforts to stand against the weather, I was so confused that I looked out to sea for the wreck, and saw nothing but the foaming heads of the great waves.

A half-dressed boatman, standing next me, pointed with his bare arm (a tattooed arrow on it, pointing in the same direction) to the left. Then, O great Heaven, I saw it, close upon us!

One mast was broken short off, six or eight feet from the deck, and lay over the side, entangled in a mass of sail and rigging; and all that ruin, as the ship rolled and beat — which she did without a moment's pause, and with a violence quite inconceivable — beat the side as if it would stave it in.

Some efforts were even then being made to cut this portion of the wreck away; for, as the ship, which was broadside on, turned towards us in her rolling, I plainly descried her people at work with axes, especially one active figure with long curling hair, conspicuous among the rest.

But a great cry, which was audible even above the wind and water, rose from the shore at this moment; the sea, sweeping over the rolling wreck, made a clean breach, and carried men, spars, casks, planks, bulwarks, heaps of such toys, into the boiling surge.

The second mast was yet standing, with the rags of a rent sail, and a wild confusion of broken cordage flapping to and fro. The ship had struck once, the same boatman hoarsely said in my ear, and then lifted in and struck again. I understood him to say that the ship was parting amidships, and I could readily suppose so, for the rolling and beating waves were too tremendous for any human work to suffer long.

As he spoke, there was another great cry of pity from the beach; four men arose with the wreck out of the deep, clinging to the rigging of the remaining mast; uppermost, the active figure with the curling hair. . . . Again we lost her, and again she rose. Two men were gone. The agony on shore increased. Men groaned, and clasped their hands; women shrieked, and turned away their faces. Some ran wildly up and down along the beach, crying for help where no help could be. I found myself one of these, frantically imploring a lot of sailors whom I knew, not to let those two lost creatures perish before our eyes.

They were making out to me, in an agitated

way, that the lifeboat had been bravely manned an hour ago, and could do nothing; and that as no man would be so desperate as to attempt to wade off with a rope, and establish a communication with the shore, there was nothing left to try; when I noticed that some new sensation moved the people on the beach, and saw them part, and Ham came breaking through them to the front. . . .

Another cry arose on the shore; and looking to the wreck, we saw the cruel sail, with blow on blow, beat off the lower of the two men, and fly up in triumph round the active figure left alone upon the mast.

Against such a sight, and against such determination as that of the calmly desperate man who was accustomed to lead half the people present, I might as hopefully have entreated the wind. "Mas'r Davy," he said, cheerily grasping me by both hands, "if my time is come, 'tis come. If 'ta'n't, I 'll bide it. Lord above bless you, and bless all! Mates, make me ready! I'm a-going off!". . .

I saw hurry on the beach, and men running with ropes from a capstan that was there, and penetrating into a circle of figures that hid him from me. Then I saw him standing alone, in a seaman's frock and trowsers; a rope in his hand, or slung to his wrist; another round his body; and several of the best men holding, at a little

distance, to the latter, which he laid out himself, slack upon the shore, at his feet.

The wreck, even to my unpracticed eye, was breaking up. I saw that she was parting in the middle, and that the life of the solitary man upon the mast hung by a thread. Still, he clung to it. He had a singular red cap on, — not like a sailor's cap, but of a finer color; and as the few yielding planks between him and destruction rolled and bulged, and his anticipative death-knell rang, he was seen by all of us to wave it. I saw him do it now, and thought I was going distracted, when his action brought an old remembrance to my mind of a once dear friend.

Ham watched the sea, standing alone, with the silence of suspended breath behind him, and the storm before, until there was a great retiring wave, when, with a backward glance at those who held the rope which was made fast round his body, he dashed in after it, and in a moment was buffeting with the water; rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the foam; then drawn again to land. They hauled in hastily.

He was hurt. I saw blood on his face, from where I stood; but he took no thought of that. He seemed hurriedly to give them some directions for leaving him more free — or so I judged from the motion of his arm — and was gone as before.

And now he made for the wreck, rising with the hills, falling with the valleys, lost beneath the rugged foam, borne in towards the shore, borne on towards the ship, striving hard and valiantly. The distance was nothing, but the power of the sea and the wind made the strife deadly. At length he neared the wreck. He was so near, that with one more of his vigorous strokes he would be clinging to it, — when a high, green, vast hillside of water, moving on shoreward, from beyond the ship, he seemed to leap up into it with a mighty bound, and the ship was gone!

Some eddying fragments I saw in the sea, as if a mere cask had been broken, in running to the spot where they were hauling in. Consternation was in every face. They drew him to my very feet — insensible — dead.

He was carried to the nearest house; and no one preventing me, I remained near him, busy, while every means of restoration was tried; but he had been beaten to death by the great wave, and his generous heart was stilled forever.

As I sat beside the bed, when hope was abandoned and all was done, a fisherman, who had known me when Emily and I were children, and ever since, whispered my name at the door.

"Sir," said he, with tears starting in his weather-beaten face, which, with his trembling lips, was ashy pale, "will you come over yonder?"

The old remembrance that had been recalled to me was in his look. I asked him, terror-stricken, leaning on the arm he held out to support me:

"Has a body come ashore?"

He said, "Yes."

"Do I know it?" I asked then.

He answered nothing.

But he led me to the shore. And on that part of it where she and I had looked for shells, two children — on that part of it where some lighter fragments of the old boat, blown down last night, had been scattered by the wind — among the ruins of the home he had wronged — I saw him lying with his head upon his arm, as I had often seen him lie at school.

OLIVER TWIST

Oliver Twist was published in 1838.

The story shows the miseries of life in an English poorhouse. The inmates were then treated with cruelty, and wrong-doing was daily practised by those in charge of the inmates.

Oliver Twist was born in this poorhouse, where his mother died. When the boy asked for more of the thin gruel, he was soundly whipped. He ran away to London, and at last found a home ; but he was kidnapped and forced to live with thieves and compelled to aid them in house-breaking and wrong-doing. He is rescued from this life by a country doctor. He finds a sister. There are about twenty prominent characters. The author's purpose is to show crime in all of its repulsiveness. He also showed the evil of training boys to commit those crimes and practices.

The plot is managed with the highest art and with consummate power by him, who, in the midst of arduous duties, found opportunities of visiting personally those haunts of suffering in London which needed a keen, intelligent eye and a large, sympathetic heart to bring them before the public for relief.

The selections are from Chapters II and XXXII respectively.

OLIVER TWIST AT THE WORKHOUSE

THE room in which the boys were fed was a large stone hall with a copper [1] at one end. Out of this the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the gruel at meal-times. Of this festive composition each boy had one porringer,[2] and no more — except on occasions of great public re-

[1] *Copper:* a large boiler made of copper and bricks.

[2] *Porringer:* a cup from which children are fed.

joicing, when he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides. The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation, they would sit staring at the copper, with such eager eyes, as if they could have devoured the very bricks of which it was composed; employing themselves meanwhile in sucking their fingers most assiduously, with the view of catching up any stray splashes of gruel that might have been cast thereon.

Boys have generally excellent appetites. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months; at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and had n't been used to that sort of thing (for his father kept a small cook-shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel *per diem*, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next to him. He had a wild, hungry eye; and they implicitly believed him. A council was held; lots were cast who should walk up to the master after supper that evening and ask for more; and it fell to Oliver Twist.

The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master, in his cook's uniform, stationed himself at the copper; his pauper assistants ranged themselves behind him; the gruel was served

out; and a long grace said over a short commons.[1] The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered to each other, and winked at Oliver, while his next neighbors nudged him. Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said, somewhat alarmed at his own temerity:

"Please, sir, I want some more."

The master was a fat, healthy man; but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralyzed with wonder; the boys with fear.

"What!" said the master at length, in a faint voice.

"Please, sir," replied Oliver, "I want some more."

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle, pinioned him in his arms, and shrieked aloud for the beadle.[2]

The board were sitting in solemn conclave, when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said:

"Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!"

[1] *Commons:* fare.

[2] *Beadle:* in England, a petty official.

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

"For *more!*" said Mr. Limbkins. "Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me distinctly. Do I understand that he asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?" [1]

"He did, sir," replied Bumble.

"That boy will be hung," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. "I know that boy will be hung."

Nobody controverted the prophetic gentleman's opinion. An animated discussion took place. Oliver was ordered into instant confinement; and a bill was next morning pasted on the outside of the gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist off the hands of the parish. In other words, five pounds and Oliver Twist were offered to any man or woman who wanted an apprentice to any trade, business, or calling.

"I was never more convinced of anything in my life," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, as he knocked at the gate and read the bill next morning; "I was never more convinced of anything in my life, than I am that that boy will come to be hung."

[1] *Dietary:* a rule of diet prescribed in workhouses.

OLIVER TWIST AND THE COUNTRY LIFE[1]

WHO can tell the pleasure and delight, the peace of mind and soft tranquillity, the sickly boy felt in the balmy air, and among the green hills and rich woods of an inland village! Who can tell how scenes of peace and quietude sink into the minds of pain-worn dwellers in close and noisy places, and carry their own freshness deep into jaded hearts! Men who have lived in crowded, pent-up streets, through lives of toil, and never wished for change; men to whom custom has indeed been second nature, and who have come almost to love each brick and stone that formed the narrow boundaries of their daily walks: even they, with the hand of death upon them, have been known to yearn for one short glimpse of Nature's face. Carried far from the scenes of their old pains and pleasures, they have seemed to pass at once into a new state of being; and crawling forth, from day to day, to some green sunny spot, have had such memories wakened within them by the sight of sky, and hill and plain, and glistening water, that a foretaste of Heaven itself has soothed their quick decline, and they have sunk into their tombs as peacefully as the sun, whose setting they watched from their lonely

[1] The unhappy charity boy has been taken into the home of Mrs. Maylie and her niece, Miss Rose, who live in the country.

chamber window but a few hours before, faded from their dim and feeble sight.

The memories which peaceful country scenes call up are not of this world, nor of its thoughts and hopes. Their gentle influence may teach us how to weave fresh garlands for the graves of those we loved; may purify our thoughts, and bear down before it old enmity and hatred: but beneath all this there lingers, in the least reflective mind, a vague and half-formed consciousness of having held such feelings long before, in some remote and distant time, which calls up solemn thoughts of distant times to come, and bends down pride and worldliness beneath it.

It was a lovely spot to which they repaired. Oliver, whose days had been spent among squalid crowds, and in the midst of noise and brawling, seemed to enter upon a new existence there. The rose and the honeysuckle clung to the cottage walls; the ivy crept round the trunks of the trees; and the garden flowers perfumed the air with delicious odors. . . .

It was a happy time. The days were peaceful and serene; the nights brought with them neither fear nor care; no languishing in a wretched prison, or associating with wretched men; nothing but pleasant and happy thoughts. . . . He would walk with Mrs. Maylie and Rose, and hear them talk of books; or perhaps sit near them, in some shady place, and listen while the young

lady read — which he could have done until it grew too dark to see the letters.

Then he had his own lesson for the next day to prepare; and at this he would work hard, in a little room which looked into the garden, till evening came slowly on, when the ladies would walk out again, and he with them, listening with such pleasure to all they said; and so happy if they wanted a flower that he could climb to reach, or had forgotten anything he could run to fetch, that he could never be quick enough about it.

When it became quite dark, and they returned home, the young lady would sit down to the piano and play some pleasant air, or sing, in a low and gentle voice, some old song which it pleased her aunt to hear. There would be no candles lighted at such times as these; and Oliver would sit by one of the windows, listening to the sweet music, in perfect rapture. . . .

In the morning, Oliver would be a-foot by six o'clock, roaming the fields and plundering the hedges, far and wide, for nosegays of wild flowers, with which he would return laden home, and which it took great care and consideration to arrange, to the best advantage, for the embellishment of the breakfast table. . . .

So three months glided away; three months which, in the life of the most blessed and favored of mortals, might have been unmingled happiness, and which, in Oliver's, were true felicity.

With the purest and most amiable generosity on one side, and the truest, warmest, soul-felt gratitude on the other, it is no wonder that, by the end of that short time, Oliver Twist had become completely domesticated with the old lady and her niece, and that the fervent attachment of his young and sensitive heart was repaid by their pride in, and attachment to himself.

BLEAK HOUSE

This romance appeared in 1853. It was written as a protest and warning against the law's delays, as exhibited in the Court of Chancery. It contains the tragedy of Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock. It also contains the short but touching story of poor Jo. It not only pictures the position of wards in Chancery, but shows the slow process of law in England at that time. At the time this book was published, there was a suit before the court which had then continued twenty years and was no nearer a final settlement than at the beginning. Between thirty and forty counsel had appeared at one time and the cost had already exceeded three hundred and fifty thousand dollars. This was called "*a friendly suit.*" This novel sets forth the truth concerning the wrongs of the Court of Chancery.

The narrative is in the language of Esther Summerson. Her guardian is John Jarndyce. These two, with Ada Clare and Horace Skimpole, have sought out three poor and orphaned children, who are living in a London garret.

The selections are from Chapters XV and XXIII respectively.

CHARLEY

I

We all went to Bell Yard, a narrow alley at a very short distance. We soon found the chandler's shop. In it was a good-natured-looking old woman.

"Neckett's children?" said she, in reply to my inquiry. "Yes, surely, miss. Three pair, if you please. Door right opposite the top of the stairs." And she handed me the key across the counter.

I glanced at the key, and glanced at her; but she took it for granted that I knew what to do with it. As it could be intended only for the children's door, I came out, without asking any questions, and led the way up the dark stairs. . . .

We went up to the top room. I tapped at the door, and a little shrill voice inside said, "We are locked in. Mrs. Blinder's got the key."

I applied the key on hearing this, and opened the door.

In a poor room, with a sloping ceiling, and containing very little furniture, was a mite of a boy, some five or six years old, nursing and hushing a heavy child of eighteen months. There was no fire, though the weather was cold; both children were wrapped in some poor shawls and tippets, as a substitute. Their clothing was not so warm, however, but that their noses looked red and pinched, and their small figures shrunken, as the boy walked up and down, nursing and hushing the child with its head on his shoulder.

"Who has locked you up here alone?" we naturally asked.

"Charley," said the boy, standing still to gaze at us.

"Is Charley your brother?"

"No. She's my sister, Charlotte. Father called her Charley."

"Are there any more of you besides Charley?"

"Me," said the boy, "and Emma," patting the

limp bonnet of the child he was nursing. "And Charley."

"Where is Charley now?"

"Out a-washing," said the boy, beginning to walk up and down again, and taking the nankeen bonnet much too near the bedstead, by trying to gaze at us at the same time.

We were looking at each other and at these two children, when there came into the room a very little girl, childish in figure, but shrewd and older-looking in the face — pretty-faced too — wearing a womanly sort of bonnet much too large for her, and drying her bare arms on a womanly sort of apron. Her fingers were white and wrinkled with washing, and the soapsuds were yet smoking which she wiped off her arms. But for this, she might have been a child, playing at washing, and imitating a poor working woman with a quick observation of the truth.

She had come running from some place in the neighborhood, and had made all the haste she could. Consequently, though she was very light, she was out of breath, and could not speak at first, as she stood panting, and wiping her arms, and looking quietly at us.

"O, here's Charley!" said the boy.

The child he was nursing stretched forth its arms and cried out to be taken by Charley. The little girl took it, in a womanly sort of manner belonging to the apron and the bonnet, and stood

looking at us over the burden that clung to her most affectionately.

"Is it possible," whispered my guardian, as we put a chair for the little creature and got her to sit down with her load, the boy keeping close to her, holding to her apron — "that this child works for the rest? Look at this! — Look at this!"

It was a thing to look at. The three children close together, and two of them relying solely on the third, and the third so young and yet with an air of age and steadiness that sat so strangely on the childish figure.

"Charley, Charley!" said my guardian. "How old are you?"

"Over thirteen, sir," replied the child.

"O, what a great age," said my guardian. "What a great age, Charley!"

I cannot describe the tenderness with which he spoke to her; half playfully, yet all the more compassionately and mournfully.

"And do you live alone here with these babies, Charley?" said my guardian.

"Yes, sir," returned the child, looking up into his face with perfect confidence, "since father died."

"And how do you live, Charley? O Charley," said my guardian, turning his face away for a moment, "how do you live?"

"Since father died, sir, I've gone out to work. I'm out washing to-day."

"God help you, Charley!" said my guardian. "You 're not tall enough to reach the tub!"

"In pattens I am, sir," she said quickly. "I 've got a high pair as belonged to mother."

"And when did mother die? Poor mother!"

"Mother died just after Emma was born," said the child, glancing at the face upon her bosom. "Then father said I was to be as good a mother to her as I could. And so I tried. And so I worked at home, and did cleaning and nursing and washing, for a long time before I began to go out. And that's how I know how; don't you see, sir?"

"And do you often go out!"

"As often as I can," said Charley, opening her eyes and smiling, "because of earning sixpences and shillings."

"And do you always lock the babies up when you go out?"

"To keep 'em safe, sir, don't you see?" said Charley. . . . "Perhaps I can run in sometimes, and they can play, you know, and Tom is n't afraid of being locked up, are you, Tom?"

"No!" said Tom, stoutly.

"When it comes on dark, the lamps are lighted down in the court, and they show up here quite bright — almost quite bright. Don't they, Tom?"

"Yes, Charley," said Tom, "almost quite bright."

"Then he 's as good as gold," said the little

creature — O, in such a motherly, womanly way! "And when Emma's tired, he puts her to bed. And when he's tired, he goes to bed himself. And when I come home and light the candle, and has a bit of supper, he sits up again and has it with me. Don't you, Tom?"

"O yes, Charley," said Tom, "that I do!" And either in this glimpse of the great pleasure of his life, or in gratitude and love for Charley, who was all in all to him, he laid his face among the scanty folds of her frock, and passed from laughing into crying.

It was the first time since our entry that a tear had been shed among these children. The little orphan girl had spoken of their father, and their mother, as if all that sorrow were subdued by the necessity of taking courage, and by her childish importance in being able to work, and by her bustling, busy way. But now, when Tom cried, although she sat quite tranquil, looking quietly at us, and did not by any movement disturb a hair of the head of either of her little charges, I saw two silent tears fall down her face.

I stood at the window with Ada, pretending to look at the housetops, and the blackened stack of chimneys, and the poor plants, and the birds in little cages, belonging to the neighbors, when I found that Mrs. Blinder, from the shop below, had come in — perhaps it had taken her all this

time to get up stairs—and was talking to my guardian.

"It's not much to forgive 'em the rent, sir," she said; "who could take it from them?"

"Well, well!" said my guardian to us two. "It is enough that the time will come when this good woman will find that it *was* much, and that forasmuch as she did it unto the least of these—This child," he added, after a few moments, "could she possibly continue this?"

"Really, sir, I think she might," said Mrs. Blinder, getting her heavy breath by painful degrees. "She's as handy as it's possible to be. Bless you, sir, the way she tended the two children after the mother died was the talk of the yard. And it was a wonder to see her with him after he was ill, it really was. 'Mrs. Blinder,' he said to me, the very last he spoke—he was lying there—'Mrs. Blinder, I saw an angel sitting in this room last night along with my child, and I trust her to our Father.'"

II

One night, after I had gone to my room, I heard a soft tap at my door. So I said, "Come in," and there came in a pretty little girl, neatly dressed in mourning, who dropped a courtesy.

"If you please, miss," said the girl, in a soft voice, "I am Charley!"

"Why, so you are!" said I, stooping down in astonishment, and giving her a kiss. "How glad I am to see you, Charley!"

"If you please, miss," pursued Charley, in the same soft voice, "I'm your maid."

"Charley?"

"If you please, miss, I'm a present to you, with Mr. Jarndyce's love."

I sat down with my hand on Charley's neck, and looked at Charley.

"And Oh, miss," says Charley, clapping her hands, with the tears starting down her dimpled cheeks, "Tom's at school, if you please; and little Emma, she's with Mrs. Blinder, miss. And Tom, he would have been at school; and Emma, she would have been left with Mrs. Blinder; and I should have been here, all a deal sooner, miss; only Mr. Jarndyce thought that Tom and Emma and I had better get a little used to parting first, we were so small. Don't cry, if you please, miss."

"I can't help it, Charley."

"No, miss, I can't help it," says Charley. "And if you please, miss, Mr. Jarndyce's love, and he thinks you'll like to teach me now and then. And, if you please, Tom and Emma and I are to see each other once a month. And, I'm so happy and so thankful, miss," cried Charley, with a heaving heart, "and I'll try to be such a good maid!"

Charley dried her tears, and entered on her functions, going in her matronly little way about the room, and folding up everything she could lay her hands upon.

Presently Charley came creeping back to my side, and said, "Oh don't cry, if you please, miss."

And I said again, "I can't help it, Charley."

And Charley said again: "No, miss; I can't help it." And so, after all, I did cry for joy, indeed, and so did she.

MUGBY JUNCTION

Mugby Junction appeared in 1866. The hero, or narrator of the story, is a clerk in the firm of "Barbox Brothers." Later, he becomes a partner. At last he becomes the firm itself.

On account of many and bitter disappointments, and the faithlessness of one whom he loved, he is moody and very unhappy. Finally circumstances awaken and develop his better and higher nature and he extends a helping hand to all who need him.

One day, upon the street of a large town, he is overtaken and accosted by a little girl whose name is Polly. She tells him that she has lost her way. He takes her to his hotel, protects and cares for her and at last her mother arrives. Her mother proves to be the woman he had once loved.

This selection is from Chapter II.

POLLY

HAVING seen his portmanteaus safely housed in the hotel he chose, and having appointed his dinner hour, Barbox Brothers[1] went out for a walk in the busy streets. Although he had arrived at his journey's end for the day by noon, he had since insensibly walked about the town so far and so long that the lamp-lighters were now at their work in the streets, and the shops were sparkling up brilliantly. Thus reminded to turn towards his quarters, he was in the act of doing so, when a very little hand crept into his, and a very little voice said:

[1] In the story the traveller is called "Barbox Brothers" because that is the name printed on his baggage.

"Oh! if you please, I am lost!"

He looked down and saw a very little fair-haired girl.

"Yes," she said, confirming her words with a serious nod. "I am indeed. I am lost!"

Greatly perplexed, he stopped, looked about him for help, descried none, and said, bending low:

"Where do you live, my child?"

"I don't know where I live," she returned. "I am lost."

"What is your name?"

"Polly."

"What is your other name?"

The reply was prompt, but was not understood.

Imitating the sound as he caught it, he hazarded the guess, "Trivits?"

"Oh no!" said the child, shaking her head. "Nothing like that."

"Say it again, little one."

An unpromising business. For this time it had quite a different sound.

He made the venture, "Paddens?"

"Oh no!" said the child. "Nothing like that."

"Once more. Let us try it again, dear."

A most hopeless business. This time it swelled into four syllables. "It can't be Tappitarver?" said Barbox Brothers, rubbing his head with his hat in discomfiture.

"No! It ain't," the child quietly assented.

On her trying this unfortunate name once more, with extraordinary efforts at distinctness, it swelled into eight syllables at least.

"Ah! I think," said Barbox Brothers, with a desperate air of resignation, "that we had better give it up."

"But I am lost," said the child, nestling her little hand more closely in his, "and you'll take care of me, won't you?" . . .

"Lost!" he repeated, looking down at the child. "I am sure *I* am. What is to be done?"

"Where do *you* live?" asked the child, looking up at him wistfully.

"Over there," he answered, pointing vaguely in the direction of his hotel.

"Had n't we better go there?" said the child.

"Really," he replied, "I don't know but what we had."

So they set off hand in hand. . . .

"We are going to have dinner when we get there, I suppose," said Polly.

"Well," he rejoined, "I — Yes, I suppose we are."

"Do you like your dinner?" asked the child.

"Why, on the whole," said Barbox Brothers, "yes, I think I do."

"I do mine," said Polly. "Have you any brothers and sisters?"

"No. Have you?"

"Mine are dead."

"Oh!" said Barbox Brothers. With that absurd sense of unwieldiness of mind and body weighing him down, he would not have known how to pursue the conversation beyond this curt rejoinder, but that the child was always ready for him.

"What," she asked, turning her soft hand coaxingly in his, "are you going to do to amuse me after dinner?"

"Upon my soul, Polly," exclaimed Barbox Brothers, very much at a loss, "I have not the slightest idea."

"Then I tell you what," said Polly. "Have you got any cards at your house?"

"Plenty," said Barbox Brothers, in a boastful vein.

"Very well. Then I'll build houses, and you shall look at me. You must n't blow, you know."

"Oh no," said Barbox Brothers. "No, no, no. No blowing. Blowing's not fair."

He flattered himself that he had said this pretty well for an idiotic monster; but the child, instantly perceiving the awkwardness of his attempt to adapt himself to her level, utterly destroyed his hopeful opinion of himself by saying compassionately: "What a funny man you are!"

Feeling, after this melancholy failure, as if he every minute grew bigger and heavier in person, and weaker in mind, Barbox gave himself up for a bad job. No giant ever submitted more meekly

to be led in triumph by all-conquering Jack than he to be bound in slavery to Polly.

"Do you know any stories?" she asked him.

He was reduced to the humiliating confession: "No."

"What a dunce you must be, must n't you?" said Polly.

He was reduced to the humiliating confession: "Yes."

"Would you like me to teach you a story? But you must remember it, you know, and be able to tell it right to somebody else afterwards." He professed that it would afford him the highest mental gratification to be taught a story, and that he would humbly endeavor to retain it in his mind.

Whereupon Polly, giving her hand a new turn in his, expressive of settling down for enjoyment, commenced a long romance, of which every relishing clause began with the words: "So this," or "And so this." As, "So this boy;" or "So this fairy;" or "And so this pie was four yards round and two yards and a quarter deep."

The interest of the romance was derived from the intervention of this fairy to punish this boy for having a greedy appetite. To achieve which purpose, this fairy made this pie, and this boy ate and ate and ate, and his cheeks swelled and swelled and swelled. There were many tributary circumstances, but the interest culminated in the

total consumption of this pie, and the bursting of this boy.

Truly he was a fine sight, Barbox Brothers, with serious attentive face, and ear bent down, much jostled on the pavement of the busy town, but afraid of losing a single incident of the story, lest he should be examined in it by and by, and found deficient.

Thus they arrived at the hotel. And there he had to say at the bar, and awkwardly enough:

"I have found a little girl!"

The whole establishment turned out to look at the little girl. Nobody knew her; nobody could make out her name, as she set it forth — except one chambermaid, who said it was Constantinople — which it was n't.

"I will dine with my young friend in a private room," said Barbox Brothers to the hotel clerk, "and perhaps you will be so good as to let the police know that the pretty baby is here. I suppose she is sure to be inquired for soon, if she has not been already. Come along, Polly."

Perfectly at ease and peace, Polly came along, but, finding the stairs rather stiff work, she was carried up by Barbox Brothers. The dinner was a most transcendent success, and the Barbox sheepishness, under Polly's directions how to mince her meat for her, and how to diffuse gravy over the plate with a liberal and equal hand, was another fine sight.

"And now," said Polly, "while we are at dinner, you be good, and tell me that story I taught you."

With the tremors of a Civil Service examination upon him, and very uncertain indeed, not only as to the time at which the pie appeared in history, but also as to the measurements of that fact, Barbox Brothers made a shaky beginning, but under encouragement did very fairly.

"I told you to be good," said Polly, "and you are good, ain't you?"

"I hope so," replied Barbox Brothers.

Such was his deference that Polly, elevated on a platform of soft cushions in a chair at his right hand, encouraged him with a pat or two on the face from the greasy bowl of her spoon, and even with a gracious kiss. In getting her feet upon her chair, however, to give him this last reward, she toppled forward among the dishes, and caused him to exclaim, as he effected her rescue; "Gracious Angels! Whew! I thought we were in the fire. Polly!"

"What a coward you are, ain't you?" said Polly, when replaced.

"Yes, I am rather nervous," he replied. "Whew! Don't, Polly! Don't flourish your spoon, or you 'll go over sideways. Don't tilt up your legs when you laugh, Polly, or you'll go over backwards. Whew! Polly, Polly, Polly," said Barbox Brothers, nearly succumbing to despair, "we are environed with dangers."

Indeed, he could see no security from the pitfalls that were yawning for Polly, but in proposing to her, after dinner, to sit upon a low stool.

"I will, if you will," said Polly.

So, as peace of mind should go before all, he begged the waiter to wheel aside the table, bring a pack of cards, a couple of footstools, and a screen, and close in Polly and himself before the fire, as it were in a snug room within the room. Then, finest sight of all, was Barbox Brothers on his footstool, contemplating Polly as she built successfully, and growing blue in the face with holding his breath, lest he should blow the house down.

"How you stare, don't you?" said Polly, in a houseless pause.

Detected in this ignoble fact, he felt obliged to admit: "I am afraid I was looking rather hard at you, Polly."

"Why do you stare?" asked Polly.

"I cannot," he murmured to himself, "recall why,—I don't know, Polly."

"You must be a simpleton to do things and not know why, must n't you?" said Polly.

In spite of this reproof, he went into the building trade as a journeyman under Polly, and they built three stories high, four stories high; even five.

"I say! Who do you think is coming?" asked Polly, rubbing her eyes after tea.

He guessed: "The waiter?"

"No," said Polly, "the dustman. I am getting sleepy."

A new embarrassment for Barbox Brothers!

"I don't think I am going to be fetched to-night," said Polly. "What do you think?"

He thought not either. After another quarter of an hour, the dustman not only impending, but actually arriving, recourse was had to the chambermaid, who cheerily undertook that the child should sleep in a comfortable and wholesome room, which she herself would share.

"And I know you will be careful, won't you," said Barbox Brothers, as a new fear dawned upon him, "that she don't fall out of bed?"

Polly found this so highly entertaining that she was under the necessity of clutching him round the neck with both arms as he sat on his footstool picking up the cards, and rocking him to and fro, with her dimpled chin on his shoulder.

"Oh, what a coward you are, ain't you?" said Polly. "Do *you* fall out of bed?"

"N — not generally, Polly."

"No more do I."

With that, Polly gave him a reassuring hug or two to keep him going, and then giving that confiding mite of a hand of hers to be swallowed up in the hand of the chambermaid, she trotted off, chattering, without a vestige of anxiety.

DOMBEY AND SON

Dombey and Son was published in 1848. The scene is laid in England. Mrs. Dombey dies and leaves her husband with a baby boy who is worshipped by Mr. Dombey. He neglects his daughter, Florence, and gives all his affection to the little son, Paul. But Paul dies. Mr. Dombey marries a cold, proud woman who displeases him by her friendliness to Florence, and in other ways. Difficulties arise and Florence seeks refuge with an old sea captain, — Captain Cuttle, — whom Paul knew and loved. She marries Walter Gay, a friend of her childhood. They go to sea. Her father fails in business, becomes humbled and desolate. Florence returns, comes to her father and cares for him. Some distinct and good purpose is apparent in all the novels of Dickens. "Dombey and Son" depicts the pride and selfishness of an old London merchant and the forgiving, charitable spirit of a lovely girl.

The selections are from Chapters XIV (abridged) and XVI respectively.

PAUL DOMBEY AT THE DANCE[1]

ONCE, when there was a pause in the dancing, Lady Skettles told Paul that he seemed very fond of music. Paul replied that he was; and if she was, too, she ought to hear his sister Florence sing.

Lady Skettles presently discovered that she was dying with anxiety to have that gratification; and though Florence was very much frightened

[1] The fragile child, Paul Dombey, has been sent from home to attend Dr. Blimber's school. His sister Florence has come to visit him.

to sing before so many people, and begged earnestly to be excused, yet, on Paul calling her to him, and saying, "Do, Floy! Please! For me, dear!" she went straight to the piano, and began.

When they all drew a little away, that Paul might see her; and when he saw her sitting there alone, so young, and good, and beautiful, and kind to him; and heard her thrilling voice, so natural and sweet, and such a golden link between him and all his life's love and happiness, rising out of the silence; he turned his face away and hid his tears. Not, as he told them when they spoke to him, not that the music was too plaintive or too sorrowful, but it was so dear to him.

They all loved Florence! How could they help it! Paul had known beforehand that they must and would; and sitting in his cushioned corner, with calmly folded hands, and one leg loosely doubled under him, few would have thought what triumph and delight expanded his childish bosom while he watched her, or what a sweet tranquillity he felt.

Lavish comments on "Dombey's sister" reached his ears from all the boys: admiration of the self-possessed and modest little beauty was on every lip: reports of her intelligence and accomplishments floated past him constantly; and, as if borne upon the air of the summer night, there was a half-intelligible sentiment diffused around,

referring to Florence and himself, and breathing sympathy for both, that soothed and touched him.

He did not know why. For all that the child observed, and felt, and thought that night — the present and the absent; what was then and what had been — were blended like the colors of the rainbow, or in the plumage of rich birds when the sun is shining on them, or in the softening sky when the same sun is setting.

The many things he had had to think of lately passed before him in the music; not as claiming his attention over again, or as likely evermore to occupy it, but as peacefully disposed of and gone. A solitary window, gazed through years ago, looked out upon an ocean, miles and miles away; upon its waters, fancies, busy with him only yesterday, were hushed and lulled to rest like broken waves.

The same mysterious murmur he had wondered at when lying on his couch on the beach he still heard sounding in his sister's song. Through the universal kindness he still thought he heard it speaking to him. Thus little Paul sat musing, listening, looking on, and dreaming; and was very happy.

THE LAST HOURS OF LITTLE PAUL[1]

Paul had never risen from his little bed. He lay there, listening to the noises in the street, quite tranquilly; not caring much how the time went, but watching it and watching everything about him with observing eyes.

When the sunbeams struck into his room through the rustling blinds, and quivered on the opposite wall like golden water, he knew that evening was coming on, and that the sky was red and beautiful. As the reflection died away, and a gloom went creeping up the wall, he watched it deepen, deepen, deepen into night. Then he thought how the long streets were dotted with lamps, and how the peaceful stars were shining overhead.

His fancy had a strange tendency to wander to the river, which he knew was flowing through the great city; and now he thought how black it was, and how deep it would look, reflecting the hosts of stars — and more than all, how steadily it rolled away to meet the sea.

As it grew later in the night, and footsteps in

[1] The principal persons in this narrative are: Mr. Paul Dombey, a rich merchant; his son, little Paul; his daughter, Florence; and the nurse who had cared for the boy in infancy. The fondest hope of the father has been that the son may grow to manhood and succeed to the business that he himself has established. The mother had died in the infancy of little Paul.

the street became so rare that he could hear them coming, count them as they passed, and lose them in the hollow distance, he would lie and watch the many-colored ring about the candle, and wait patiently for day.

His only trouble was, the swift and rapid river. He felt forced, sometimes, to try to stop it — to stem it with his childish hands — or choke its way with sand — and when he saw it coming on, resistless, he cried out! But a word from Florence, who was always at his side, restored him to himself; and leaning his poor head upon her breast, he told Floy of his dream, and smiled.

When the day began to dawn again, he watched for the sun; and when its cheerful light began to sparkle in the room, he pictured to himself — pictured! he saw — the high church towers rising up into the morning sky, the town reviving, waking, starting into life once more, the river glistening as it rolled, (but rolling fast as ever), and the country bright with dew.

Familiar sounds and cries came by degrees into the street below; the servants in the house were roused and busy; faces looked in at the door, and voices asked his attendants softly how he was. Paul always answered for himself, "I am better. I am a great deal better, thank you! Tell Papa so!"

By little and little, he got tired of the bustle of the day, the noise of carriages and carts, and

people passing and repassing; and would fall asleep, or be troubled with a restless and uneasy sense again — the child could hardly tell whether this were in his sleeping or his waking moments — of that rushing river. "Why, will it never stop, Floy?" he would sometimes ask her. "It is bearing me away, I think!"

But Floy could always soothe and reassure him; and it was his daily delight to make her lay her head down on his pillow, and take some rest.

"You are always watching me, Floy. Let me watch *you*, now!" They would prop him up with cushions in a corner of his bed, and there he would recline the while she lay beside him; bending forward oftentimes to kiss her, and whispering to those who were near that she was tired, and how she had sat up so many nights beside him.

Thus the flush of the day, in its heat and light, would gradually decline; and again the golden water would be dancing on the wall. . . .

The people around him changed unaccountably, except Florence; Florence never changed. But this figure [of his father] with its head upon its hand returned so often, and remained so long, and sat so still and solemn, never speaking, never being spoken to, and rarely lifting up its face, that Paul began to wonder languidly if it were real; and in the night-time saw it sitting there, with fear.

"Floy," he said, "what *is* that?"

"Where, dearest?"

"There! at the bottom of the bed."

"There's nothing there except Papa!"

The figure lifted up its head, and rose, and coming to the bedside said:

"My own boy! Don't you know me?"

Paul looked it in the face, and thought, was this his father? But the face, so altered, to his thinking, thrilled while he gazed, as if it were in pain; and before he could reach out both his hands to take it between them, and draw it towards him, the figure turned away quickly from the little bed, and went out at the door.

Paul looked at Florence with a fluttering heart; but he knew what she was going to say, and stopped her with his face against her lips. The next time he observed the figure sitting at the bottom of the bed, he called to it.

"Don't be so sorry for me, dear Papa! Indeed I am quite happy!"

His father, coming, and bending down to him —which he did quickly, and without first pausing by the bedside— Paul held him round the neck, and repeated those words to him several times, and very earnestly; and Paul never saw him in his room again at any time, whether it were day or night, but he called out, "Don't be so sorry for me! Indeed I am quite happy!" This was the beginning of his always saying in the morn-

ing that he was a great deal better, and that they were to tell his father so.

How many times the golden water danced upon the wall; how many nights the dark, dark river rolled towards the sea in spite of him, Paul never counted, never sought to know. If their kindness or his sense of it, could have increased, they were more kind, and he more grateful every day; but whether they were many days or few, appeared of little moment now, to the gentle boy.

One night he had been thinking of his mother, and her picture in the drawing-room down stairs, and thought she must have loved sweet Florence better than his father did. . . .

"Floy, did I ever see mamma?"

"No, darling; why?"

"Did I ever see any kind face, like mamma's, looking at me when I was a baby, Floy?"

He asked incredulously, as if he had some vision of a face before him.

"Oh yes, dear!"

"Whose, Floy?"

"Your old nurse's. Often."

"And where is my old nurse?" said Paul. . . . "Show me that old nurse, Floy, if you please!"

"She is not here, darling. She shall come to-morrow."

"Thank you, Floy!"

Paul closed his eyes with those words, and fell asleep. When he awoke, the sun was high, and

the broad day was clear and warm. He lay a little, looking at the windows, which were open, and the curtains rustling in the air, and waving to and fro. Then he said, "Floy, is it to-morrow? Is she come?". . .

The next thing that happened was a noise of footsteps on the stairs; and then Paul woke — woke mind and body — and sat upright in his bed. He saw them now about him. There was no gray mist before them, as there had been sometimes in the night. He knew them every one, and called them by their names.

"And who is this? Is this my old nurse?" said the child, regarding with a radiant smile a figure coming in.

Yes, yes. No other stranger would have shed those tears at sight of him, and called him her dear boy, her pretty boy, her own poor blighted child. No other woman would have stooped down by his bed, and taken up his wasted hand, and put it to her lips and breast, as one who had some right to fondle it. No other woman would have so forgotten everybody there but him and Floy, and been so full of tenderness and pity.

"Floy, this is a kind good face," said Paul. "I am glad to see it again. Don't go away, old nurse! Stay here!". . . "Now lay me down," he said, "and Floy, come close to me, and let me see you!"

Sister and brother wound their arms around each other, and the golden light came streaming in, and fell upon them, locked together.

"How fast the river runs, between its green banks and the rushes, Floy! But it's very near the sea. I hear the waves! They always said so!"

Presently he told her that the motion of the boat upon the stream was lulling him to rest. How green the banks were now, how bright the flowers growing on them, and how tall the rushes! Now the boat was out at sea, but gliding smoothly on. And now there was a shore before him. Who stood on the bank!

He put his hands together, as he had been used to do at his prayers. He did not remove his arms to do it; but they saw him fold them so, behind her neck.

"Mamma is like you, Floy. I know her by the face! But tell them that the print upon the stairs at school is not divine enough. The light about the head is shining on me as I go!"

The golden ripple on the wall came back again, and nothing else stirred in the room. The old, old fashion! The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course, and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion—Death!

Oh thank GOD, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of Immortality! And look upon us, angels of young children, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean!

MARTIN CHUZZLEWIT

In the year 1843, after a visit to America, Mr. Dickens began a new tale called *Martin Chuzzlewit.* In this book are embodied many of his American experiences and reminiscences. It is fresh and vigorous in thought and in style. There is much versatility of character and invention. Martin Chuzzlewit, the hero, spent some time in a western portion of America, then half settled. Mark Tapley is with him. He is a light-hearted, optimistic fellow. The morals and manners of the people whom the companions met were not flattering.

Many American readers resented this story after extending so much kindness to Dickens as their guest. Among the leading characters in the book are; Tom and Ruth Pinch, Pecksniff, Sarah Gamp and Betsy Prig.

The selections are from Chapters XXXIX and XXXVI respectively.

RUTH PINCH AND HER HOUSEKEEPING

Pleasant little Ruth! Cheerful, tidy, bustling, quiet little Ruth! No doll's house ever yielded greater delight to its young mistress than little Ruth derived from her glorious dominion over the triangular parlor and the two small bedrooms.

To be Tom's housekeeper. What dignity! Housekeeping, upon the commonest terms, associated itself with elevated responsibilities of all sorts and kinds; but housekeeping for Tom implied the utmost complication of grave trusts and mighty charges. Well might she take the

keys out of the little chiffonier[1] which held the tea and sugar, and out of the two little damp cupboards down by the fireplace, where the very black beetles got mouldy and had the shine taken out of their backs by envious mildew, and jingle them upon a ring before Tom's eyes when he came down to breakfast.

Well might she, laughing musically, put them up in that blessed little pocket of hers with a merry pride! For it was such a grand novelty to be mistress of anything, that if she had been the most relentless and despotic of all little housekeepers, she might have pleaded just that much for her excuse, and have been honorably acquitted.

So far from being despotic, however, there was a coyness about her very way of pouring out the tea which Tom quite revelled in. And when she asked him what he would like to have for dinner, and faltered out "chops," as a reasonably good suggestion after their last night's successful supper, Tom grew quite facetious and rallied her desperately.

"I don't know, Tom," said his sister, blushing, "I am not quite confident, but I think I could make a beefsteak pudding, if I tried, Tom."

"In the whole catalogue of cookery, there is nothing I should like so much as a beefsteak

[1] *Shĭf'fŏnĕr'*: a movable closet.

pudding!" cried Tom, slapping his leg to give greater force to this reply.

"Yes, dear, that's excellent! But if it should happen not to come quite right the first time," his sister faltered; "if it should happen not to be a pudding exactly, but should turn out a stew, or a soup, or something of that sort, you'll not be vexed, Tom, will you?"

The serious way in which she looked at Tom; the way in which Tom looked at her; and the way in which she gradually broke into a merry laugh at her own expense, would have enchanted you.

"Why," said Tom, "this is capital. It gives us a new and quite uncommon interest in the dinner. We put into a lottery for a beefsteak pudding and it is impossible to say what we may get. We may make some wonderful discovery, perhaps, and produce such a dish as never was known before."

"I shall not be at all surprised if we do, Tom," returned his sister, still laughing merrily, "or if it should prove to be such a dish as we shall not be anxious to produce again; but the meat must come out of the saucepan at last, somehow or other, you know. We can't cook it into nothing at all; that's a great comfort. So if you like to venture, *I* will."

"I have not the least doubt," rejoined Tom, "that it will come out an excellent pudding; or,

at all events, I am sure that I shall think so. There is naturally something so handy and brisk about you, Ruth, that if you said you could make a bowl of faultless turtle soup, I should believe you."

And Tom was right. She was precisely that sort of person. Nobody ought to have been able to resist her coaxing manner, and nobody had any business to try. Yet she never seemed to know it was her manner at all. That was the best of it.

Well! she washed up the breakfast cups, chatting away the whole time, and telling Tom all sorts of anecdotes about the brass-and-copper founder; put everything in its place; made the room as neat as herself; — you must not suppose its shape was half as neat as hers though, or anything like it; — and brushed Tom's old hat round and round and round again, until it was as sleek as Mr. Pecksniff.[1]

Then she discovered that Tom's shirt-collar was frayed at the edge, and flying upstairs for a needle and thread, came flying down again with her thimble on, and set it right with wonderful expertness. . . . She had no sooner done this than off she was again; and there she stood once more, as brisk and busy as a bee, tying that compact little chin of hers into an equally compact little bonnet; intent on bustling out to the butcher's, without a minute's loss of time; and inviting Tom

[1] Another character in the story.

to come and see the steak cut, with his own eyes.

To see the butcher slap the steak, before he laid it on the block, and give his knife a sharpening, was to forget breakfast instantly. . . .

Back they went to the lodgings again, after they had bought some eggs and flour, and such small matters; and Tom sat gravely down to write at one end of the parlor table, while Ruth prepared to make the pudding at the other end. . . . First, she tripped downstairs into the kitchen for the flour, then for the pie-board, then for the eggs, then for the butter, then for a jug of water, then for the rolling-pin, then for a pudding-basin, then for the pepper, then for the salt; making a separate journey for everything, and laughing every time she started off afresh.

When all the materials were collected, she was horrified to find that she had no apron on, and so ran *up* stairs, by way of variety, to fetch it. . . . And then there were her cuffs to be tucked up, for fear of flour; and she had a little ring to pull off her finger, which would n't come off; and during the whole of these preparations she looked demurely now and then at Tom, from under her dark eye-lashes, as if they were all a part of the pudding, and indispensable to its composition. . . .

Such a busy little woman as she was! So full of self-importance, and trying so hard not to

smile, or seem uncertain about anything! It was a perfect treat to Tom to see her with her brows knit and her rosy lips pursed up, kneading away at the crust, rolling it out, cutting it up into strips, lining the basin with it, shaving it off fine round the rim; chopping up the steak into small pieces, raining down pepper and salt upon them, packing them into the basin, pouring in cold water for gravy; and never venturing to steal a look in his direction, lest her gravity should be disturbed.

At last, the basin being quite full and only wanting the top crust, she clapped her hands, all covered with paste and flour, at Tom, and burst out heartily into such a charming little laugh of triumph, that the pudding need have had no other seasoning to commend it to the taste of any reasonable man on earth.

[Before the dinner is served, Tom Pinch goes out with his friend John Westlock, and, returning, brings the friend to dine.]

The table was already spread for dinner; and though it was spread with nothing very choice in the way of glass or linen, and with green-handled knives, and very mountebanks of two-pronged forks, it wanted neither damask, silver, gold, nor china: no, nor any other garniture at all. There it was; and being there, nothing else would have done as well.

The success of that initiative dish, that first

experiment of hers in cookery, was so entire, so unalloyed and perfect, that John Westlock and Tom agreed she must have been studying the art in secret for a long time past.

TOM PINCH GOES TO LONDON

When the coach came round at last, with "London" blazoned in letters of gold upon the boot, it gave Tom such a turn, that he was half disposed to run away. But he didn't do it; for he took his seat upon the box instead, and looking down upon the four grays, felt as if he were another gray himself, or, at all events, a part of the turn-out, and was quite confused by the novelty and splendor of his situation.

And really it might have confused a less modest man than Tom to find himself sitting next to that coachman; for of all the swells that ever flourished a whip, professionally, he might have been elected emperor. He didn't handle his gloves like another man, but put them on — even when he was standing on the pavement, quite detached from the coach — as if the four grays were, somehow or other, at the ends of the fingers. It was the same with his hat. He did things with his hat, which nothing but an unlimited knowledge of horses and the wildest freedom of the road could ever have made him perfect in.

Valuable little parcels were brought to him with particular instructions, and he pitched them into this hat, and stuck it on again; as if the laws of gravity did not admit of its being knocked off

or blown off, and nothing like an accident could befall it.

The guard, too! Seventy breezy miles a day were written in his very whiskers. His manners were a canter, his conversation a round trot. He was a fast coach upon a downhill turnpike road; he was all pace. A wagon could n't have moved slowly with that guard and his key-bugle on the top of it. . . .

It was a charming evening, mild and bright. And even with the weight upon his mind which arose out of the immensity and uncertainty of London, Tom could not resist the captivating sense of rapid motion through the pleasant air. The four grays skimmed along, as if they liked it quite as well as Tom did; the bugle was in as high spirits as the grays; the coachman chimed in sometimes with his voice; the wheels hummed cheerfully in unison; the brass-work on the harness was an orchestra of little bells; and thus, as they went clinking, jingling, rattling smoothly on, the whole concern, from the buckles of the leaders' coupling-reins to the handle of the hind boot, was one great instrument of music.

Yoho, past hedges, gates, and trees; past cottages and barns, and people going home from work. Yoho, past donkey-chaises drawn aside into the ditch, and empty carts with rampant horses, whipped up at a bound upon the little watercourse, and held by struggling carters close to

TOM PINCH STARTS FOR LONDON

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the five-barred gate, until the coach had passed the narrow turning in the road.

Yoho, by churches dropped down by themselves in quiet nooks, with rustic burial-grounds about them, where the graves are green, and daisies sleep — for it is evening — on the bosoms of the dead.

Yoho, past streams, in which the cattle cool their feet, and where the rushes grow; past paddock-fences, farms and rick-yards; past last year's stacks, cut, slice by slice, away, and showing, in the waning light, like ruined gables, old and brown. Yoho, down the pebbly dip, and through the merry water-splash, and up at a canter to the level road again. Yoho! Yoho! . . .

Yoho, among the gathering shades; making of no account the deep reflections of the trees, but scampering on through light and darkness, all the same, as if the light of London, fifty miles away, were quite enough to travel by, and some to spare. Yoho, beside the village green, where cricket-players linger yet, and every little indentation made in the fresh grass by bat or wicket, ball or player's foot, sheds out its perfume on the night.

Away with four fresh horses from the Bald-faced Stag, where topers congregate about the door admiring; and the last team with traces hanging loose, go roaming off towards the pond, until observed and shouted after by a dozen

throats, while volunteering boys pursue them. Now with a clattering of hoofs and striking out of fiery sparks, across the old stone bridge, and down again into the shadowy road, and through the open gate, and far away, away, into the wold. Yoho! . . .

See the bright moon! High up before we know it, making the earth reflect the objects on its breast like water. Hedges, trees, low cottages, church steeples, blighted stumps and flourishing young slips, have all grown vain upon the sudden, and mean to contemplate their own fair images till morning. . . . The moss-grown gate, ill-poised upon its creaking hinges, crippled and decayed, swings to and fro before its glass, like some fantastic dowager; while our own ghostly likeness travels on, Yoho! Yoho! through ditch and brake, upon the ploughed land and the smooth, along the steep hillside and steeper wall, as if it were a phantom-hunter.

Clouds too! And a mist upon the hollow! Not a dull fog that hides it, but a light airy gauze-like mist, which in our eyes of modest admiration gives a new charm to the beauties it is spread before. Yoho! Why, now we travel like the moon herself. Hiding this minute in a grove of trees; next minute in a patch of vapor; emerging now upon our broad clear course; withdrawing now, but always dashing on, our journey is a counterpart of hers.

The beauty of the night is hardly felt, when day comes leaping up. Yoho! Two stages, and the country roads are almost changed to a continuous street. Yoho, past market-gardens, rows of houses, villas, crescents, terraces, and squares; past wagons, coaches, carts; past early workmen, late stragglers, drunken men, and sober carriers of loads; past brick and mortar in its every shape; and in among the rattling pavements, where a jaunty seat upon a coach is not so easy to preserve.

Yoho, down countless turnings, and through countless mazy ways, until an old inn-yard is gained, and Tom Pinch, getting down, quite stunned and giddy, is in London!

SKETCHES BY BOZ

Sketches by Boz was published in 1835.

The critics at once recognized genius and the hand of a master. These sketches were "illustrative of every-day life and every-day people." This was the first book published by Dickens. The book was regarded as unusually clever of its kind and it attracted wide and immediate attention. The demand was greater than the supply. In the book are mentioned many characters which were introduced and more fully developed in Dickens's later works.

The selection is from Chapter VII.

OUR NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBOR

THEY were a young lad of eighteen or nineteen, and his mother, a lady of about fifty, or it might be less. The mother wore a widow's weeds, and the boy was also clothed in deep mourning. They were poor, — very poor; for their only means of support arose from a pittance the boy earned by copying writings, and translating for booksellers.

They had removed from some country place and settled in London; partly because it afforded better chance of employment for the boy, and partly, perhaps, with the natural desire to leave a place where they had been in better circumstances, and where their poverty was known. They were proud under these reverses, and above revealing their wants and privations to strangers.

How bitter their privations were, and how hard the boy worked to remove them, no one ever knew but themselves. Night after night, two, three, four hours after midnight, could we hear the occasional raking up of the scanty fire, or the hollow aud half-stifled cough which indicated his being still at work; and day after day, we could see more plainly that nature had set that unearthly light in his plaintive face, which is the beacon of her worst disease.

Actuated, we hope, by a better feeling than mere curiosity, we contrived to establish, first an acquaintance, and then a close intimacy with the poor strangers. Our worst fears were realized; the boy was sinking fast. Through a part of the winter, and the whole of the following spring and summer, his labors were unceasingly prolonged; and the mother attempted to procure needlework embroidery, — anything for bread. A few shillings, now and then, were all she could earn. The boy worked steadily on; dying by minutes, but never once giving utterance to complaint or murmur.

One beautiful autumn evening we went to pay our customary visit to the invalid. His little remaining strength had been decreasing rapidly for two or three days preceding, and he was lying on the sofa at the open window, gazing at the setting sun. His mother had been reading the Bible to him, for she closed the book as we entered, and advanced to meet us.

"I was telling William," she said, "that we must manage to take him into the country somewhere, so that he may get quite well. He is not ill, you know, but he is not very strong, and has exerted himself too much lately." Poor thing! The tears that streamed through her fingers, as she turned aside, as if to adjust her close widow's cap, too plainly showed how fruitless was the attempt to deceive herself.

We sat down by the head of the sofa, but said nothing, for we saw the breath of life was passing gently but rapidly from the young form before us. At every respiration, his heart beat more slowly.

The boy placed one hand in ours, grasped his mother's arm with the other, drew her hastily towards him, and fervently kissed her cheek. There was a pause. He sank back upon his pillow, and looked long and earnestly at his mother's face.

"William, William!" murmured the mother, after a long interval, "don't look at me so — speak to me dear!" The boy smiled languidly, but an instant afterward his features resolved into the same cold, solemn gaze.

"William, dear William, rouse yourself, dear; don't look at me so, love, pray don't! Oh, my God! what shall I do!" cried the widow, clasping her hands in agony — "my dear boy! he is dying!"

The boy raised himself by a violent effort, and

folded his hands together. "Mother, dear, dear mother, bury me in the open fields — anywhere but in these dreadful streets. I should like to be where you can see my grave, but not in these close crowded streets; they have killed me. Kiss me again, mother; put your arms round my neck —"

He fell back, and a strange expression stole upon his features; not of pain or suffering, but an indescribable fixing of every line and muscle. The boy was dead.

BARNABY RUDGE

Barnaby Rudge was published in 1841. This was Dickens's fifth novel.

Barnaby is a poor, affectionate but simple-minded lad. He lives in London with his mother and his raven, Grip. His mother had fled to London to escape a mysterious blackmailer. His father had been involved in a murder when he was steward to a country gentleman, named Haredale, who had been killed. The "No Popery" riots of Lord George Gordon, in 1780, figure in the plot. The account of the gathering of the mob, their famous march, and the storming of Newgate is unsurpassed in modern fiction.

This story contains excellent humor and ludicrous situations. Many of the descriptions are masterly, among which are those of the old English inn, the Maypole, near Epping Forest, and an old innkeeper.

The selection is from Chapter LXIV.

THE BURNING PRISON

And now the strokes began to fall like hail upon the gate and on the strong building; for those who could not reach the door spent their fierce rage on anything — even on the great blocks of stone, which shivered their weapons into fragments and made their hands and arms to tingle as if the walls were active in their stout resistance, and dealt them back their blows.

The clash of iron ringing upon iron mingled with the deafening tumult and sounded high above it, as the great sledge-hammers rattled on

the nailed and plated door; the sparks flew off in showers; men worked in gangs, and at short intervals relieved each other, that all their strength might be devoted to the work; but there stood the portal still, as grim and dark and strong as ever, and, save for the dints upon its battered surface, quite unchanged.

Some brought all their energies to bear upon this toilsome task; and some, rearing ladders against the prison, tried to clamber to the summit of the walls they were too short to scale; and some again engaged a body of police a hundred strong, and beat them back and trod them under foot by force of numbers; others besieged the house on which the jailer had appeared, and, driving in the door, brought out his furniture and piled it up against the prison gate to make a bonfire which should burn it down.

As soon as this device was understood, all those who had labored hitherto, cast down their tools and helped to swell the heap, which reached halfway across the street, and was so high that those who threw more fuel on the top got up by ladders. When all the keeper's goods were flung upon this costly pile, to the last fragment, they smeared it with the pitch and tar and resin they had brought, and sprinkled it with turpentine. To all the woodwork round the prison doors they did the like, leaving not a joist or beam untouched. This infernal christening performed, they fired

the pile with lighted matches and with blazing tow, and then stood by, awaiting the result.

The furniture being very dry, and rendered more combustible by wax and oil, besides the arts they had used, took fire at once. The flames roared high and fiercely, blackening the prison wall, and twining up its lofty front like burning serpents.

At first the men crowded round the blaze and vented their exultation only in their looks; but when it grew hotter and fiercer — when it crackled, leaped, and roared, like a great furnace — when it shone upon the opposite houses, and lighted up not only the pale and wondering faces at the windows, but the inmost corners of each habitation — when, through the deep red heat and glow, the fire was seen sporting and toying with the door, now clinging to its obdurate surface, now gliding off with fierce inconstancy and soaring high into the sky, anon returning to fold it in its burning grasp and lure it to its ruin — . . . when scores of objects, never seen before, burst upon the view, and things the most familiar put on some new aspect — then the mob began to join the whirl, and, with loud yells and shouts, and clamor, such as happily is seldom heard, bestirred themselves to feed the fire and keep it at its height. . . .

Meanwhile, and in the midst of all the roar and outcry, those who were nearest to the pile

heaped up again the burning fragments that came toppling down, and raked the fire about the door, which, although a sheet of flame, was still a door fast locked and barred, and kept them out. Great pieces of blazing wood were passed, besides, above the people's heads to such as stood about the ladders, and some of these, climbing to the topmost stave, and holding on with one hand by the prison wall, exerted all their skill and force to cast these firebrands on the roof or down into the yards within.

In many instances their efforts were successful; which occasioned a new and appalling addition to the horrors of the scene: for the prisoners within, seeing from between their bars that the fire caught in many places and thrived fiercely, and being all locked up in their cells for the night, began to know that they were in danger of being burnt alive. . . .

Nor were the assailants alone affected by the outcry from within the prison. The women, who were looking on, shrieked loudly, beat their hands together, stopped their ears, and many fainted. The men who were not near the walls and active in the siege, rather than do nothing, tore up the pavement of the street, and did so with a haste and fury they could not have surpassed if that had been the jail, and they were near their object. Not one living creature in the throng was for an instant still. The whole great mass were mad.

A shout! Another! Another yet, though few knew why, or what it meant. But those around the gate had seen it slowly yield, and drop from its topmost hinge. It hung on that side by but one; yet it was upright still, because of the bar, and its having sunk, of its own weight, into the heap of ashes at its foot. There was now a gap at the top of the doorway, through which could be descried a gloomy passage, cavernous and dark. Pile up the fire!

It burnt fiercely. The door was red-hot, and the gap wider. They vainly tried to shield their faces with their hands, and standing as if in readiness for a spring, watched the place. Dark figures, some crawling on their hands and knees, some carried in the arms of others, were seen to pass along the roof. It was plain the jail could hold out no longer. The keeper, and his officers, and their wives and children, were escaping. Pile up the fire!

The door sank down again: it settled deeper in the cinders — tottered — yielded — was down!

As they shouted again, they fell back for a moment, and left a clear space about the fire that lay between them and the jail entry. One of them leapt upon the blazing heap, and, scattering a train of sparks into the air, and making the dark lobby glitter with those that hung upon his dress, dashed into the jail.

The hangman followed. And then so many

rushed upon their track, that the fire got trodden down and thinly strewn about the street; but there was no need of it now, for, inside and out, the prison was in flames.

PICTURES FROM ITALY[1]

THE COLISEUM

We said to the coachman, "Go to the Coliseum." In a quarter of an hour or so, he stopped at the gate, and we went in.

It is no fiction, but plain, sober, honest truth, to say — so suggestive and distinct it is at this hour — that for a moment — actually in passing in — they who will may have the whole great pile before them, as it used to be, with thousands of eager faces staring down into the arena, and such a whirl of strife, and blood, and dust, going on there, as no language can describe.

Its solitude, its awful beauty, and its utter desolation strike upon the stranger the next moment, like a softened sorrow; and never in his life, perhaps, will he be so moved and overcome by any sight not immediately connected with his own affections and afflictions.

To see it crumbling there, an inch a year; its walls and arches overgrown with green; its corridors open to the day; the long grass growing in its porches; young trees of yesterday springing up on its ragged parapets, and bearing fruit, chance products of the seeds dropped there by the birds

[1] Published in 1845.

that build their nests within its chinks and crannies; to see its Pit of Fight filled up with earth, and the peaceful Cross planted in the centre; to climb into its upper halls and look down on ruin, ruin, ruin all about it; the triumphal arches of Constantine, Septimus Severus,[1] and Titus; the Roman Forum; the Palace of the Cæsars; the temples of the old religion, fallen down and gone; this is to see the ghost of old Rome, wicked, wonderful old city, haunting the very ground on which its people trod.

It is the most impressive, the most stately, the most solemn, grand, majestic, mournful sight conceivable. Never, in its bloodiest prime, can the sight of the gigantic Coliseum, full and running over with the lustiest life, have moved one heart as it must move all who look upon it now, a ruin. God be thanked: a ruin!

[1] Sĕp′ tĭ mŭs Sē vē′ rŭs.

THE BURIED CITIES OF ITALY

STAND at the bottom of the great market-place of Pompeii, and look up the silent streets, through the ruined temples of Jupiter and Isis, over the broken houses with their inmost sanctuaries open to the day, away to Mount Vesuvius, bright and snowy in the peaceful distance; and lose all count of time, and heed of other things, in the strange and melancholy sensation of seeing the destroyed and destroyer making this quiet picture in the sun.

Then ramble on, and see, at every turn, the little familiar tokens of human habitation and everyday pursuits; the chafing of the bucket-rope in the stone rim of the exhausted well; the track of carriage wheels in the pavement of the street; the marks of drinking vessels on the stone counter of the wine shop; the Amphoræ [1] in private cellars, stored away so many hundred years ago, and undisturbed to this hour — all rendering the solitude and deadly lonesomeness of the place ten thousand times more solemn than if the volcano, in its fury, had swept the city from the earth, and sunk it in the bottom of the sea.

After it was shaken by the earthquake, which preceded the eruption, workmen were employed

[1] *Ăm'-fō-rē:* jars with two handles; jars tapering at the bottom; used for holding wines, oils, etc.

in shaping out, in stone, new ornaments for temples and other buildings that had suffered. Here lies their work, outside the city gate, as if they would return to-morrow. . . .

Next to the wonder of going up and down the streets, and in and out of the houses, and traversing the secret chambers of the temples of a religion that has vanished from the earth, and finding so many traces of remote antiquity,— as if the course of Time had been stopped after this desolation, and there had been no nights and days, months, years, and centuries since,— nothing is more impressive and terrible than the many evidences of the searching nature of the ashes, as bespeaking their irresistible power, and the impossibility of escaping them.

In the wine cellars, they forced their way into the earthen vessels, displacing the wine and choking them, to the brim, with dust. In the tombs, they forced the ashes of the dead from the funeral urns, and rained new ruin even into them. The mouths and eyes and skulls of all the skeletons were stuffed with this terrible hail. In Herculaneum, where the flood was of a different and heavier kind, it rolled in like a sea. Imagine a deluge of water turned into marble, at its height — and that is what is called "the lava" here. . . .

Many of the paintings on the walls in the roofless chambers of both cities, or carefully removed to the museum at Naples, are as fresh

and plain as if they had been executed yesterday. Here are the subjects of still life, as provisions, dead game, bottles, glasses, and the like; familiar classical stories, or mythological fables, always forcibly and plainly told; conceits of cupids, quarreling, sporting, working at trades; theatrical rehearsals; poets reading their productions to their friends; inscriptions chalked upon the walls; political squibs, advertisements, rough drawings by schoolboys; everything to people and restore the ancient cities, in the fancy of the wondering visitor.

Furniture, too, you see, of every kind — lamps, tables, couches; vessels for eating, drinking, and cooking; workmen's tools, surgical instruments, tickets for the theatre, pieces of money, personal ornaments, bunches of keys found clenched in the grasp of skeletons, helmets of guards and warriors; little household bells, yet musical with their old domestic tones.

The least among these objects lends its aid to swell the interest of Vesuvius, and invest it with a perfect fascination. Then looking, from either ruined city, into the neighboring grounds overgrown with beautiful vines and luxuriant trees, and remembering that house upon house, temple on temple, building after building, and street after street, are still lying underneath the roots of all the quiet cultivation, waiting to be turned up to the light of day, is something so wonderful, so

full of mystery, so captivating to the imagination, that one would think it would be paramount, and yield to nothing else.

To nothing but Vesuvius: but the mountain is the genius of the scene. From every indication of the ruin it has worked, we look, again, with an absorbing interest, to where its smoke is rising up into the sky. It is beyond us, as we thread the ruined streets; above us, as we stand upon the ruined walls; we follow it through every vista of broken columns, as we wander through the empty courtyards of the houses; and through the garlandings and interlacings of every wandering vine.

AN ASCENT OF MOUNT VESUVIUS

THE sun is shining brightly; there is not a cloud or speck of vapor in the whole blue sky, looking down upon the Bay of Naples; and the moon will be full to-night. No matter that the snow and ice lie thick upon the summit of Vesuvius, or that we have been on foot all day at Pompeii,[1] or that croakers maintain that strangers should not be on the mountain by night, in such an unusual season. Let us take advantage of the fine weather; make the best of our way to Resina,[2] the little village at the foot of the mountain; prepare ourselves, as well as we can, on so short notice, at the guide's house; ascend at once, and have sunset halfway up, moonlight at the top, and midnight to come down in.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, there is a terrible uproar in the little stable-yard of Signor Salvatore,[3] the recognized head-guide, with the gold band round his cap; and thirty under-guides, who are all scuffling and screaming at once, are preparing half-a-dozen saddled ponies, three litters, and some stout staves, for the journey. Every one of the thirty, quarrels with the other twenty-nine, and frightens the six ponies; and as much of the village as can possibly squeeze itself

[1] Pŏm pā′ yē. [2] Rä sē′ nä. [3] Sē nyōr′ Säl vä tō′ rē.

into the little stable-yard participates in the tumult and gets trodden on by the cattle.

After much violent skirmishing, and more noise than would suffice for the storming of Naples, the procession starts. The head-guide, who is liberally paid for all the attendants, rides a little in advance of the party; the thirty other guides proceed on foot. Eight go forward with the litters that are to be used by-and-by; and the remaining two-and-twenty beg.

We ascend gradually, by stony lanes like rough, broad flights of stairs, for some time. At length we leave these, and the vineyards on either side of them, and emerge upon a bleak, bare region where the lava lies confusedly, in enormous rusty masses, as if the earth had been ploughed up by burning thunderbolts. And now we halt to see the sun set. The change that falls upon the dreary region and on the whole mountain, as its red light fades and the night comes on — and the unutterable solemnity and dreariness that reign around, who that has witnessed it, can ever forget!

It is dark, when, after winding for some time over the broken ground, we arrive at the foot of the cone, which is extremely steep, and seems to rise, almost perpendicularly, from the spot where we dismount. The only light is reflected from the snow, deep, hard, and white, with which the cone is covered.

It is now intensely cold, and the air is piercing. The thirty-one have brought no torches, knowing that the moon will rise before we reach the top. Two litters are devoted to the two ladies; the third, to a rather heavy gentleman from Naples, whose hospitality and good-nature have attached him to the expedition, and determined him to assist in doing the honors of the mountain. The rather heavy gentleman is carried by fifteen men; each of the ladies by half-a-dozen. We who walk make the best use of our staves. And so the whole party begin to labor upward over the snow. . . .

From tingeing the top of the snow above us with a band of light, and pouring it in a stream through the valley below, while we have been ascending in the dark, the moon soon lights the whole white mountain side and the broad sea down below, and tiny Naples in the distance, and every village in the country round.

The whole prospect is in this lovely state, when we come upon the platform on the mountain-top — the region of fire — an exhausted crater formed of great masses of gigantic cinders, like blocks of stone from some tremendous waterfall, burnt up; from every chink and crevice of which, hot, sulphurous smoke is pouring out, while from another conical-shaped hill, the present crater, rising abruptly from this platform at the end, great sheets of flame are streaming forth, reddening

the night with flame, blackening it with smoke, and spotting it with red hot stones and cinders that fly up into the air like feathers and fall down like lead. What words can paint the gloom and grandeur of this scene!

The broken ground; the smoke; the sense of suffocation from the sulphur; the fear of falling down through the crevices in the yawning ground; the stopping, every now and then, for somebody who is missing in the dark (for the dense smoke now obscures the moon); the intolerable noise of the thirty; and the hoarse roaring of the mountain; these make it a scene of such confusion, at the same time, that we reel again. . . .

There is something in the fire and roar that generates an irresistible desire to get nearer to it. We cannot rest long without starting off, two of us, on our hands and knees, accompanied by the head-guide, to climb to the brim of the flaming crater, and try to look in. Meanwhile, the thirty yell, as with one voice, that it is a dangerous proceeding, and call to us to come back, frightening the rest of the party out of their wits.

What with their noise, and what with the trembling of the thin crust of ground, that seems about to open underneath our feet and plunge us in the burning gulf below (which is the real danger, if there be any); and what with the flashing of the fire in our faces, and the shower of red-hot ashes that is raining down, and the choking

smoke and sulphur; we may well feel giddy and irrational, like drunken men.

But we contrive to climb up to the brim, and look down, for a moment, into the hell of boiling fire below. Then we all three came rolling down; blackened, and singed, and scorched, and hot, and giddy; and each with his dress alight in half-a-dozen places.

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Our Mutual Friend. 1864–65.
Pickwick Papers, The, 1836–37.
Sketches by Boz, 1836.
Tale of Two Cities, A, 1850.
Uncommercial Traveler, The, 1860.

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